



SOFTBALL

***2026 AND 2027
CASE BOOK***

2026 and 2027 NCAA SOFTBALL CASE BOOK

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NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION



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Table of Contents

Preface.....	<u>5</u>
Editorial Changes.....	<u>6</u>
Rule 1—Definitions.....	<u>7</u>
Rule 2—Field of Play.....	<u>8</u>
Rule 3—Equipment and Uniforms.....	<u>11</u>
Rule 4—Game Personnel.....	<u>18</u>
Rule 5—Game Management and Pregame Procedures	<u>20</u>
Rule 6—The Game	<u>28</u>
Rule 7—Appeals and Protests	<u>39</u>
Rule 8—Players and Substitutes.....	<u>43</u>
Rule 9—Defense.....	<u>55</u>
Rule 10—Pitching.....	<u>70</u>
Rule 11—Batting.....	<u>82</u>
Rule 12—Base Running.....	<u>95</u>
Rule 13—Misconduct.....	<u>119</u>
Rule 14—Scoring	<u>124</u>
Umpires	<u>128</u>
Appendixes.....	<u>134</u>

Preface

The NCAA Case Book contains rulings as a supplement to the official rules. Included are actual game-like situations that add meaning to the written code of rules and verify that there can be only one interpretation to any given rule.

The format of the book follows the official NCAA Softball Rules Book, rule-by-rule and section-by-section. Its presentation provides clear, realistic game-type plays that allow the reader to better comprehend the application and adjudication of the official written rules.

The NCAA Division I Softball Rules Subcommittee and Divisions II and III Softball Rules Committee believe this Case Book will assist umpires, coaches, players and spectators to better apply and appreciate the rules of softball.

— **Vickie Van Kleeck, secretary-rules editor**

NCAA Softball Playing Rules

Editorial Changes

*These changes reflect additions, clarifications or deletions to approved interpretations that are intended to illustrate the softball rules. Approved Rulings that illustrate new case plays since the last edition are indicated by a **shaded** background.*

NEW/EDITED APPROVED RULINGS

2-5, 5-21, 7-9, 7-13, 8-28, 8-29, 9-12, 9-13, 10-8, 10-25, 11-1, 11-38, 12-10, 12-11, 12-12, 12-13, 12-14 and APPENIDX-2

RULE 1

Definitions

RUNNER

A.R. 1-1. How does a "Runner" differ from either "Base Runner" or "Batter-Runner"?

RULING: "Runner" is used when the rule or effect refers to both the base runner (a player who occupies a base at the time of a pitch) and the batter-runner (a player who occupies the batter's box at the time of the pitch and then vacates it to run the bases). When the rule or effect only applies to one or the other, the appropriate term is used.

(Rule 1.2, 1.5 and 1.19)

RULE 2

Field of Play

BACKSTOP

A.R. 2-1. A team has a brick wall exactly 25 feet from the plate apex. By adding the required backstop padding, the distance will be three inches short of the minimum. Does the field need to be moved outward from the backstop to accommodate the minimum?

RULING: No. The 25 foot minimum/30 foot maximum distances from the apex of home plate does not include the padding.

(Rule 2.3.2)

A.R. 2-2. A facility with a wood, concrete or brick backstop does not have the required padding.

RULING: Illegal. All institutional and municipal (noninstitutional) fields hosting NCAA competition with wood, concrete or brick backstops shall be padded from dugout to dugout (to the edge of the dugouts). Per Rule 5.5.1 if the situation cannot be remedied (temporarily or permanently) prior to the first pitch, the game(s) will not be played and declared a “no contest.” Officials should then file an Incident Report with the secretary-rules editor. The NCAA will then follow-up with these schools to remind them they must comply with the rule.

(Rules 2.3.4 and 5.5.1)

BASES—FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD

A.R. 2-3. In honor of breast cancer awareness month, can the bases, pitcher’s plate and/or home plate be painted pink?

RULING: No, those parts of the field and the lines must be white as specified in the rules. The intent is for visibility, safety of the players who need to visually locate the bases/plate to make a play (both offense and defense), and for umpire accuracy (colors are harder than white to see from a distance). Painted logos in the grass, banners, tarp covers and bunting in the field area are most often used in addition to special player uniforms and commemorative ribbons pinned to the right panel of the hats or over the hearts for umpires. These options are not precluded by the rules and can be expanded to observe holidays and other worthy causes.

(Rule 2.7)

A.R. 2-4. May a six-inch-long sticker be applied to the center third of the rise of a base to identify an institution, conference or commemorate an event (such as Heart Healthy Day)?

RULING: A sticker with NCAA, team or conference logo, name or abbreviation may be displayed as long as the sticker is no higher than the top of the base and the sticker is in the middle third of the rise of the base. However, stickers commemorating a charity, business or event are not approved.

(Rule 2.7)

A.R. 2-5. When a visiting DIII team arrives for a scheduled contest with another DIII institution, the visiting coach notices that they are using a double first base. The visiting coach does not agree to play with this double base. How is this situation handled by rule?

RULING: The current rule requires Division I teams to use the double base beginning with the 2026 season. Divisions II and III teams do not have to use it until the 2027 season. However, if they want to use it during the 2026 season, both coaches must agree or it cannot be used.

(Rule 2.7.2)

COACHES' BOXES

A.R. 2-6. A base coach insists on standing about 80 feet from home plate at the time of release of the pitch.

RULING: The coaches' box only has two restraining lines to prevent the coach from being too close to the batter's box and too close to the foul line. However with no back edges, the coach is free to retreat all the way to the sideline and home run fences as their comfort level dictates. The definition of lines denotes the spaces to which participants are restricted and without those back lines, there is no limitation.

(Rules 2.11 and 2.20)

DUGOUT (BENCH)

A.R. 2-7. The home team has heaters in its dugout, but the visiting team does not. Does this create an unfair advantage and should the home team provide heaters to the visiting team?

RULING: There is nothing in the playing rules that requires a home team to provide the same amenities (e.g., heaters, blankets or warm clothing) to their visitors that they have for themselves. In Rule 5.1, there are some accommodations for visiting team pregame batting practice equipment and space, but other than that coaches are left to their own sense of fair play or possible conference requirements (for example, most conferences have arrangements for a water cooler in not only the home team but also the visiting team dugout).

(Rule 2.13)

FENCES

A.R. 2-8. Is it permissible for a stenciled logo or words to be positioned on the home run fence in straight away center field?

RULING: There is nothing in the NCAA playing rules to preclude this, however, there might be limitations by the respective championship committees for their postseason play and there may be ancillary requirements for games with television coverage. That said, in general, most fields have a "batter's eye" or neutral background in straight away center field to not only help the batter pick up the pitch, but also for the catcher to pick up a thrown ball from the outfield.

(Rule 2.15)

A.R. 2-9. If the field is land locked and the home run fence cannot be extended to the required distances, what alternative plan is acceptable for a field with a 4-foot fence?

RULING: If the fence distance of 210 feet down the lines and 230 feet in center cannot be accommodated, the solution is to replace the 4-foot fence with a taller fence of at least 6 feet. The minimum distances would then be 190 feet down the lines and 220 feet in center.

(Rule 2.15.2)

NONREGULATION FIELD

A.R. 2-10. If teams are competing in a dome due to inclement weather and the wall of the dome or fabric of the bubble dictates that the home-run fence cannot be at regulation length for its height, may the host tape a line on the wall/fabric for a home-run or must a batted ball that hits the boundary be declared a ground-rule double?

RULING: If the host wishes to use a padded wall or the bubble's fabric as the home-run boundary, it can do so by having the fence butt up against the wall at some point along the smooth arc of the home-run fence. Then from that point to foul territory, a line on the wall/fabric may be higher than the fence (much like Fenway's green monster) in order to allow for a home run rather than what would be a ground rule double on a short fence at a short distance. Note that a foul pole would have to be taped or painted on the wall/fabric.

(Rule 2.22.2)

TARP

A.R. 2-11. Is the tarp roller considered part of the tarp and therefore unavailable for players to step on while attempting a catch?

RULING: Yes, in the interest of safety, "no catch" is ruled if a player catches a fly ball while stepping on the tarp or roller. If the catch is completed prior to stepping on the tarp or roller, catch and carry applies.

(Rules 2.31 and 9.4)

RULE 3

Equipment and Uniforms

ALL EQUIPMENT

A.R. 3-1. Since defensive players are permitted to hang a towel from their pants, may batters have a towel tucked in the back of their pants while at bat and or running the bases? If the towel is hit by a pitch or tagged while running, is it considered part of the uniform?

RULING: There's no purpose for a towel hanging from batters' or base runners' pants unlike the one that might be used by defenders to keep their hands dry. Since we require batting gloves to be tucked in, towels should be treated the same for offensive players and eliminate worry about tags or detached offensive equipment should it fall out.

(Rule 3.1)

BALL

A.R. 3-2. The host team, which is responsible for providing game balls, wishes to remove the manufacturer's gloss by rubbing them up with Gorilla Gold (original All Sport formula; not Gorilla Gold Golf Grip Enhancer) or Turface, but the rule says the specifications of the ball cannot be changed. Can the balls be rubbed up?

RULING: These substances may be used to rub up the game balls PRIOR to being given to the plate umpire. The prohibition on substances applies to during the game by the participants and the prohibition on changing the specifications of the ball refers to the specifications in Rule 3.2.1.

(Rule 3.2.3)

BATS—GAME

A.R. 3-3. During bat checks, one bat has a replacement grip that clearly creates a taper at the knob of the bat and another has a rubber ring that only slips over the knob of the bat.

RULING: The bat may have a knob of at least $\frac{1}{4}$ inch protruding at not more than a 90-angle from the handle of the bat. The knob may also be a flare or cone taper that extends from the knob down the handle of the bat. However, the second one was originally marketed as a way to identify particular bats for players and later marketed as absorbing vibration to the bottom hand to reduce sting. That second type of ring is specifically allowed as a marking on the knob for identification.

(Rule 3.3.1.7.2)

A.R. 3-4. Can a player grip their bat handle with a diamond style taping, which leaves parts of the handle visible within the 15 inches of the grip?

RULING: Rule 3.3.1.7.3 specifically allows for a continuous spiral tape, but it need not be a solid layer. The rationale for a continuous spiral is to have one single piece of tape as the top or only layer (not multiple pieces that will fray and peel off), but it can have open turns that reveal the handle.

(Rule 3.3.1.7.3)

A.R. 3-5. A legal bat has material under the tape of the grip, which seems to be a rope or something that is spiraled around the handle under the tape that aids in gripping the bat. As long as it is securely under the grip, is this bat attachment allowed?

RULING: The bat should not be allowed if there is a substance under the allowable grip, but if it is the tape itself (not more than 2 layers but could be in an "x" or diamond pattern), it would be allowed. **Note:** There are translucent bat grips that have paper material under the grip for team or player identification. These grips would be legal because they do not enhance the ability to grip the bat.

(Rule 3.3.1.7.3)

INAPPROPRIATE BATS

A.R. 3-6. With a runner on first base, the batter grounds into a fielder's choice putting the base runner out at second base. Before the next batter enters the batter's box, the defensive coach informs the plate umpire that the last batter used an inappropriate bat. The rules require the bat be removed from the team's possession, the player be declared out and ejected and base runners shall not advance, but does the out remain?

RULING: Yes, base runners not put out on the batted ball must return to the base occupied at the time of the pitch, but outs obtained by the defense remain.

(Rule 3.4.1)

A.R. 3-7. Immediately following a two RBI double, the opposing coach challenges the validity of the bat used. However, the on-deck batter tossed the bat out of the way of the advancing base runners and it landed in the on-deck circle where they left an identical bat. On request, the umpires examine the two bats and determine that one is inappropriate.

RULING: An appeal that an inappropriate bat has been used must be made before the identification of the bat that was used becomes questionable. If a suspect bat has been removed to the vicinity of other identical or similar bats and the umpires are not absolutely positive which bat was used, part of the EFFECT for Rule 3.4.1 cannot be enforced except that the head coach shall be ejected, the bat shall be removed from play and an incident report shall be filed by the plate umpire.

(Rule 3.4.1)

A.R. 3-8. During bat checks, the umpire crew notices one team has flat, opaque disks with a logo and a number affixed to the knobs of their bats which covered the manufacturer's note of the length and weight of each bat.

RULING: The stickers are legal and are often used for bat identification for players or to indicate bats passing barrel compression testing. Umpires must match the model number stenciled on the bat to the model number on the NCAA Approved Softball Bat List, but need not worry about lengths and weights.

(Rules 3.4.1.2 and 5.2.3)

A.R. 3-9. A dugout heater or electric blanket is used to keep the players warm. Before going on deck, each batter uses the heater to warm themselves and their bat.

RULING: Artificially warming the bats by using the heater is illegal. Players can warm themselves without placing the bat where it could be warmed. Coaches and players are expected to abide by the rules and umpires to enforce them when they detect the violation or the opposing team brings it to their attention.

(Rule 3.4.1.2.1)

A.R. 3-10. The leadoff batter hits a mammoth out-of-the-park home run. Before the opposing coach can get the attention of the plate umpire to question the appropriateness of the bat, the on-deck batter picks up the bat and steps into the batter's box. The coach then, prior to a pitch, gets the umpire's attention and points out that the bat does not have a sticker indicating barrel compression testing.

RULING: Once the umpire verifies that the bat is not stickered, the bat is removed from play, the leadoff batter is declared out, ejected along with the head coach and the run does not stand. In addition, the on-deck batter who also brought the bat into the batter's box is declared out and ejected. The plate umpire is responsible for filing an incident report detailing the ejections.

(Rule 3.4.1.3)

A.R. 3-11. The color of a bat model is listed on the NCAA Approved Softball Bat List as orange, but the bat is actually pink/salmon. A bat with "Worth 454" is stenciled on the bat but the NCAA Approved Softball Bat list has Worth 454 (-9) and (-10). Do these details have to match exactly or is it only the model numbers that must match?

RULING: It is the model numbers which must exactly match, but the additional columns provide useful information. For example, the Worth 454 bats have parentheses and a drop number on the list but not on the bat. The parentheses are needed to differentiate the models with strikes, but like all other parentheses, will not be on the bat. So the Worth 454 need only be stenciled with "Worth 454".

(Rules 3.4.1.3 and 5.2.1)

A.R. 3-12. A team has three identical bats, in this case, DeMarini Model CFI 11. Two of the three bats have legible model numbers but only CFI can be read on the third. Can this one bat without legible numbers be used?

RULING: If they're having difficulty reading a number on a bat, but other apparently identical bats make it easy to ascertain that the model is on the NCAA Approved Softball Bat List, the bat could be allowed in the game. In this case, the DeMarini's CFI series bats are very distinctive colors with a yellow 2011 model, orange 2012 and red 2013 model. On the other hand, there are quite a few DeMarini grey models (some legal and some not), and the letters on the barrel are often hard to distinguish. In addition, Fs, Ps and 8s are hard to distinguish when scuffed up so it is understandable that a BCT manager or an umpire might allow a hard to read CFI bat to be used but eliminate a similarly hard to read CFP model. If there is doubt about the legality of a bat, the bat should be disqualified from use.

(Rules 3.4.1.3 and 5.2.3)

A.R. 3-13. With a runner on third base and two outs, the batter enters the batter's box with an inappropriate bat. The batter swings and misses a dropped third strike, which goes to the backstop. The runner from third base touches home and the batter-runner reaches first base without a play. The catcher, in picking up the bat to hand to the bat handler, notices the bat is non-approved and brings it to the attention of the umpire. The rule says the bat is removed from the team's possession, the batter is declared out and ejected, but does the run score since the batter-runner is the third out?

RULING: Because advance is legal on a non-contacted pitch, the runner is entitled to advance and because the batter-runner obtained first base on the dropped third strike and was later declared out, the run does score. Score the play as a swinging strikeout - wp or pb - for the batter and then the putout goes to the nearest player so that would be first baseplayer, unassisted.

(Rule 3.4.1 EFFECT Exception)

A.R. 3-14. During bat checks for suitability, a two-piece model wobbles at the connection.

RULING: It is a judgment call as to what is excessive wobble. Multi-piece bats at production have slight wobble so if that is the case, then the bats are "as manufactured" and should be allowed to remain in play. However, if the wobble is excessive, it is no longer "as manufactured" and should be disqualified as damaged. The benefit of the doubt should go to the player and allow the bat to remain in use until the wobble is determined to be excessive (as in when wiggled, there is a noticeable lag time in the barrel moving to catch up with the handle).

(Rules 3.4.2 and 5.2.5)

A.R. 3-15. During the pregame bat inspection, should umpires remove structurally sound but well-worn bats?

RULING: The umpires should remove bats that show signs of impending failure such as structural cracks, rattles and excessive wobble. Those are all signs that the bat has significantly deteriorated on the inside and once outwardly obvious, the bat should be taken out of service to avoid breaking in pieces and hurling part of it in space as it is swung. Bats with dents should also be removed because the flat surface provides greater bat-ball surface contact and improves performance. Bats with paint chips and cleat dings do not improve the bat's performance nor lead to catastrophic failure. Those bats should only be removed when they are located on the bat model number rendering it illegible.

(Rules 3.4.2, 5.2.4 and 5.2.5)

GLOVES/MITTS

A.R. 3-16. One out, base runner on second base. On a base hit to right field, the base runner misses third base but apparently scores. It is discovered that the right fielder used an illegal glove. The offensive coach chooses to take the result of the play since a run scored. After that choice, the pitcher toes the pitcher's plate, steps back and appeals to third base for the missed base. Can the offensive coach make a second choice?

RULING: First, if the offensive coach is already the beneficiary of a base hit and a scored run, chances are they would not bring the illegal glove to the umpire's attention and the defensive coach would not alert the umpire so that only leaves the rare circumstance when the umpire notices it first. BUT if this play happened, the offensive coach would get the option to take the play or nullify it. After that choice, the offensive coach is done. Assuming the choice is that the play stands, then if the defense correctly appeals the missed base, the offending runner is declared out (second out) and the batter-runner remains on base. The offensive coach is not given a second option.

(Rules 3.6.1 and 7.1)

A.R. 3-17. Following a catch on a foul ball over the dugout, the umpire is asked to rule on a glove that appears to have a tacky substance. The rules detail the offensive coach's options but are silent on what happens to the glove.

RULING: The glove may be returned to action if it can be cleaned and is no longer tacky.

(Rule 3.6.3)

REQUIRED PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

A.R. 3-18. A player with a face injury wears an ice hockey helmet with a face mask and NOCSAE seal while they are batting and running the bases. Is there a waiver process to legalize this equipment to accommodate an injury?

RULING: There is no provision for anyone to set aside the requirement to wear a NOCSAE-approved batting helmet or replace a batting helmet with an ice hockey helmet. However, when they are on defense

there is no helmet requirement. A protective helmet from another sport may be worn if the institution deems it appropriate and the umpires do not disqualify it for a safety of opponent concern.

(Rule 3.7.1)

OPTIONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

A.R. 3-19. Infielders on a team want to wear their kneepads on their shins while on defense and batting and only move them to their knees while running the bases. Does this violate using the equipment as intended by the manufacturer?

RULING: Legal. Most kneepads are marketed as knee/shin pads and are not even sport specific to softball. However, all are designed to minimize bruises or to protect current injuries from intensifying on the legs.

(Rule 3.8.4)

UNIFORMS

A.R. 3-20.

- (1) May a team have players' names on the back of the jerseys?
- (2) May a team have a slogan or saying on the back of the jersey above the numbers?

RULING: (1) Legal. In addition, all uniform jerseys must have a distinct whole number between 0 and 99 on the back.

(2) As authorized by the institution or conference, other names/words intended to celebrate or memorialize persons, events, or other causes are permitted on the back of the jersey/uniform where the player name is traditionally located.

(Rule 3.10)

A.R. 3-21. Can a team secure sleeves to simulate a sleeveless jersey?

RULING: Illegal. This is considered wearing the uniform improperly.

(Rule 3.10)

A.R. 3-22. On a beautiful day, a pitcher, who prefers keeping their arm sweaty, wears a jacket while running the bases. Can an individual player decide they are cold and cover their uniform jersey if the other players indicate they are warm enough to play without the extra clothing?

RULING: Players, coaches and umpires should be allowed to wear as many layers of allowable clothing as they need to participate comfortably regardless of the weather conditions. So this should be allowed if worn properly, is not distracting, and doesn't interfere with the game or pose a safety risk to the player or their opponents. Note: If a batter wears a loose fitting garment that hangs into the strike zone, they should be instructed to tuck it in, roll it up or remove it so as not to disadvantage the pitcher nor block the umpire's view of the strike zone.

(Rule 3.10.2)

A.R. 3-23. Five players on a team opt to have a phrase supporting social justice on the back of their jerseys where their name is traditionally located. Six other players opt to have a different phrase supporting social justice. Is this legal?

RULING: Yes, as long as the phrases are authorized by the institution or conference. Players are allowed names/words intended to celebrate or memorialize persons, events, or other causes on the back of the jersey/uniform where the player name is traditionally located. The names/words may vary by team member.

(Rule 3.10.4)

A.R. 3-24. A pitcher who is recovering from two shoulder surgeries has experimented with different types of compression shirts. The one brand that works best only comes in black and white, but the team sleeves are red. Since the rule book specifies that colors must match, what can be done to protect the pitcher?

RULING: To avoid any issues, the options would be for the pitcher to wear red sleeves on top of the compression shirt or to buy white or black sleeves for the rest of the team and wear them on days they pitch. If you do either, there are no issues. Also, as the weather turns warmer, if no other player wears sleeves, they can be the only one with black or white showing so they would be in compliance with the rule. The other option is to explain to each umpire crew that it is a medical issue (although not classified as a legally-protected accommodation for a disability) and then it would be a crew-by-crew decision.

(Rule 3.10.8)

A.R. 3-25. A player is wearing visible yellow or gold undergarments.

RULING: Illegal. Visible undergarments must contrast with the color of the ball. Yellow or gold undergarments are not permitted.

(Rule 3.10.8)

A.R. 3-26. A pitcher wears sleeves that, by manufacturer design, can be worn on their hand over their thumb?

RULING: Legal. Visible undergarments must be worn as intended by the manufacturer (Rule 3.10.8). Also, the umpire is given discretion in Rule 10.13.4 to allow any item on the pitching hand which is not distracting.

(Rules 3.10.8 and 10.13.4)

RULE 4

Game Personnel

AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL

A.R. 4-1.

- (1) Can an eligible student-athlete, who is not on a travel party list, sit in the dugout if they drive themselves to an away contest?
- (2) If an institution's junior varsity team is on-site, may those players sit in the team's dugout?

RULING: (1) and (2) are legal as long as the players are eligible softball student-athletes of the institution.

(Rule 4.2.2)

BASE COACH

A.R. 4-2. A base coach is holding scoring materials, a stopwatch and an indicator while in the coaches' box.

RULING: Legal. There are no restrictions on items a coach may have in the coaches' box other than any device capable of transmitting information (e.g., cell phone, smart watch, etc.) (See Rule 5.9.8). A coach may have useful items to help manage the offense such as lineup cards, scouting reports, scoring materials, a stopwatch and/or indicator.

(Rules 4.3 and 5.9.8)

HEAD COACH

A.R. 4-3. An assistant coach who is in a coaches' box requests to a base umpire a suspension of play to (1) talk to the base runner on second base; or (2) question whether the umpire saw a pulled foot on a force play, or (3) report a substitution to the plate umpire.

RULING: (1), (2) and (3) are legal. Unlike NCAA baseball, conversations and business transactions are not limited to just the head coach and the plate umpire, although the head coach remains accountable for all communication with the umpire whether initiated by assistants or other team personnel. In (1) the offensive team is charged with a conference.

In (2), often, the nearest coach and umpire to the play will have a more meaningful conversation than their colleagues who were not as involved in the play.

In (3), Rule 8.5.1.3 allows "a coach" to make a substitution by notifying the plate umpire of the change.

(Rules 4.4.1.5, 6.12.5 and 8.5.1.3)

A.R. 4-4. In the first game of a double header, both the head and assistant/pitching coaches are ejected and there are no other coaches travelling with the team.

RULING: The institution can designate an employee or appoint someone to be responsible for the team for the remainder of the game. Athletic trainers, sports information staff, student managers and student coaches often travel with teams and any could be named Acting Head Coach. Student-athletes are not eligible to be appointed. Unless the ejection also carried a suspension, once the game is over, so are the ejections, therefore, game two would start with both coaches.

(Rules 4.4.3 and 13.2)

OFFICIAL SCORER

A.R. 4-5. The host team or game management director of a tournament must designate an official scorer for each game, but what if an institution hosts a large tournament with multiple fields or complexes? Must the host supply an official scorer at each field even for games in which it is not a participant?

RULING: No, the rule does not require the host to provide the official scorers only to designate them and identify them to the umpires and coaches at the pregame meeting. The host is responsible for making the provisions, even if it is simply pre-tournament information which specifies that the home team is responsible for providing the official scorer.

(Rules 4.6 and 14.1)

RULE 5

Game Management and Pregame Procedures

INSPECTION OF BATS

A.R. 5-1. One of the teams does not present an NCAA Approved Bat List prior to its game. How long does the team have from the scheduled start of the game to obtain one? If it is unreasonable to obtain one, may the game be played anyway? If not, what is the status of the game?

RULING: The list is required by rule and no competition shall be played without one. If a coach does not have one on-site, every effort should be made by the coach to obtain one. If the opposing coach (who has a list) is willing and able to share, the affected team could use a different color ink to list their bats on just the one list. In the unlikely event a list cannot be obtained, the umpires, in consultation with the on-site administrator, shall declare the game "no contest".

(Rules 5.2 and 6.21)

A.R. 5-2. A coach cuts and pastes pages of the bat list, so the list presented to the barrel compression testing (BCT) manager and the umpire is only one page rather than wasting paper to print the entire list for every game.

RULING: Coaches cannot edit the list, however, they need only print pages that list the bat models they use as long as the pages are intact and the top of each page has the date. Allowing a coach to cut and paste parts of pages together makes it impossible for the BCT manager and umpires to know which editions of the list are being combined and presented.

(Rule 5.2.1)

A.R. 5-3. During inspection of bats, a coach presents a laminated list.

RULING: Illegal. The bat list may not be laminated. The dry erase marker writing can be easily smudged or erased as the document is handled.

(Rule 5.2.1)

A.R. 5-4. Two bats are presented at barrel compression testing.

- (1) One bat has no model number stenciled on the bat because it does not have a model number.
- (2) One bat has no model number stenciled on the bat, but the manufacturer has provided a letter saying the bat is legal for NCAA play.

RULING: The model number stenciled on the bat must exactly match the model number on the current NCAA Approved Softball Bat List.

(1) The bat is legal because there is no model number on the bat AND no model number on the list.

(2) The bat is illegal because the list has a model number listed, but the bat does not have a model number or is no longer visible.

(Rule 5.2.2)

A.R. 5-5. Once the game has begun, a bat not presented for BCT or present in the umpire's pregame inspection is discovered in the game or dugout. The coach explains a player who arrived from class after the game began brought the bat with them.

RULING: The penalty for a bat not presented for BCT or pregame inspection still applies regardless of the apparently innocent circumstances. In order to protect the integrity of the game and minimize risk to opponents, it results in ejection of the violator and head coach (see below), the bat being removed from the team's possession and an incident report filed. If no specific player is in possession of the bat at the time it is reported, the head coach shall be the only person ejected. If reported anytime from entry into the batter's box until the first pitch to the next batter, the batter/batter-runner is declared out and ejected and any base runners not put out on the batted ball must return to their bases occupied at the time of the pitch. If reported after the first pitch to the next batter, as long as the bat can be positively identified, the batter/batter-runner who used it is out, if on base, and ejected and any base runners not put out on the batted ball may remain on the bases gained by the time of the report.

(Rules 5.2.2 and 5.2.5)

A.R. 5-6. After the umpires completed bat checks and the game has started, a coach wishes to add a bat to the team's inventory of available bats.

RULING: A coach may only introduce a new bat (even to replace a bat that breaks in the course of the game) at the start of the next game in a series, tournament or doubleheader, or at the resumption of a halted game, if it is preceded by BCT testing.

(Rule 5.2.2)

A.R. 5-7. A team has seven appropriately stickered bats on its BCT annotated list presented to the umpires at the start of the game, but while coaching the bases in the middle of the game, the opposing coach notices about a dozen. The coach brings the discrepancy to the umpire's attention and upon checking the bat list, only seven bats were inspected and verified on the team's bat list.

RULING: The head coach is ejected. The umpires shall remove all three bats without stickers and have them secured by the on-site administrator. The head coach may retrieve all the secured bats at the end of the series, tournament or doubleheader, or at the end of the game if BCT is to occur again before the next game. The umpires are responsible for filing an incident report.

(Rules 5.2.2 and 5.2.5)

FITNESS OF THE FIELD**A.R. 5-8.**

- (1) Between the top and bottom of the fifth inning, the home team has its grounds crew re-groom (water, drag, line and replace the bases) the infield.
- (2) After the completion of the bottom of the fifth inning, the home team's ground crew hand drags and rakes the infield.

RULING: (1) Illegal.

(2) Legal.

The home team may hand drag/rake the field after a complete inning, provided it does not delay the start of the next inning. Additional in-game field maintenance may be requested by the umpire(s). During this time, the visiting team will warm up as per Rules 6.6.6. The umpires may use discretion in the allowable time between innings if the field maintenance interferes with the defensive team's warm ups.

(Rule 5.3.4)

LINEUP CARD

A.R. 5-9. The starting players for a game must be present and in the dugout when the game starts. However, the rules don't comment on substitute players. Are they also required to be present to be listed on the lineup card?

RULING: No. The intent for having the starting players in uniform, in the dugout and available for play at the start of the game, is so the game is not held up waiting for a player or a team does not employ stalling strategies. However, it does not preclude late arriving players from participating as long as they are listed on the lineup card as eligible players and then legally substituted into the game.

(Rule 5.7)

A.R. 5-10. On the line-up card, a coach wants to print the name of the player as J.C. Smith. The player prefers to go by the first name of "J.C." instead of their given name of Jacquelyn. Is this contrary to the requirement to list first and last names?

RULING: If the player goes by J.C., that satisfies the requirement. The intent is to provide accurate information to media and opponents so if they are listed as J.C. on the school roster and that's what they would answer to if someone called out their name, then that actually meets the intent of the rule better than requiring a given name that they don't use and people are not likely to know them as. The key is to avoid confusion so if the team has a Jacquelyn Smith and a Jane Smith, only one may be listed as J.C. Smith and the other would have to use their first name. Lastly, this does not extend to allowing nonspecific nicknames as first names such as "Speedy" Smith or "Lefty" Jones. If a coach wants those monikers, then the player would need to be listed as J.C. "Speedy" Smith.

(Rule 5.7.3)

A.R. 5-11. At the pregame meeting, a coach has crossed off the names of several players who are not available to play due to a class conflict. The game is halted in the third inning and when it is resumed days later, the players are available.

- (1) Can they be added to the lineup card as eligible substitutes without penalty?
- (2) Several players have changed jersey numbers since the start of the original game, so can the jersey numbers be modified?

RULING: (1) Because the completion of the halted game is a continuation of the original game, even if a player originally ineligible becomes eligible before the resumption of the halted game, the lineup card may NOT be changed. A player who was originally eligible for play and is no longer eligible may also NOT compete in the resumption.

(2) Eligible players who have changed jersey numbers are eligible to participate. Number changes must be reported at the pregame meeting prior to the resumption of the game. Failure to report such changes are subject to appeal as an inaccurate line-up. Note also that the game status of starting players, substitutes and ejected personnel is the same as they were at the time the game was halted. So a starting player who re-entered and was subsequently removed from the game and a substitute already entered and replaced, remain unavailable and a player ejected before the game was halted remains ejected for the resumed game.

(Rule 5.7.3)**SCOUTING INFORMATION AND ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT USE**

A.R. 5-12. An institution is hosting a tournament and wants to utilize a multi-frequency 3D tracking radar (e.g., Flight Scope) in a game in which the host team is not playing.

RULING: Illegal. A tournament host may stream video of all games in its tournament and can film or stream games in which it is not a participant. Flight Scope is not considered filming or streaming since it provides more in depth information. However, information gained from any type of Doppler or photographic imagery device may not be accessed or retrieved during the game. Video or electronic data used for scouting or teaching purposes may not be transmitted during a game.

(Rule 5.9.1)

A.R. 5-13. A coach is unable to travel with the team, but is able to watch the game via live streaming video or statistical software. In the interest of student-athlete welfare, may the coach communicate with the team via cell phone, text or email during the game to minimize the effects of not being there on the student-athletes? If the rules preclude this, is there any exception or waiver process if the coach has a medical condition that prevents them from traveling?

RULING: The playing rules preclude coaching from outside the team areas and field and there is not a waiver process to set this aside. "Distance coaching" by members of the coaching staff, adjunct staff, such as team psychologists and strength coaches, private pitching and hitting coaches, and input from other interested parties, is only prohibited from the start of the game until its conclusion, therefore, remote contact would be allowed before the game and between games of a double header or a tournament.

(Rule 5.9.2)

A.R. 5-14. The defensive team positions a uniformed team member in the stands behind the backstop to chart its own team's pitches. Also, a uniformed team member is in the press box running the scoreboard and music between innings. Both of these uniformed players are listed on the team's lineup card. Can they play in the game once they have been working behind the backstop?

RULING: Uniformed personnel may not gain information from outside the dugout and be an active participant in the game, so at the start of the game, they should be directed to return to the dugout if they are going to play or remove/cover up their jerseys to continue performing those responsibilities. If they perform duties outside the dugout, they render themselves ineligible for the remainder of the game unless the game is halted AND resumed on a later date. In that case, those working players would be eligible to play in the resumed game.

(Rule 5.9.2)

A.R. 5-15. The host team has cameras mounted on or in its dugout for its future video analysis of its hitters and the visiting team has an unmanned camera on a tripod in its dugout to video the pitchers.

RULING: Since neither of these cameras is attended to by personnel, acquiring video for future use from these team areas is permissible. The intent is not to prohibit the uploading of information, but rather to continue restricting the downloading and use of information during the game.

(Rule 5.9.3)

A.R. 5-16. A team has one of its athletic trainers videotaping with a hand-held tablet camera from the dugout. Because it is not a coach, is this legal?

RULING: Under Rule 4.2.2, only team personnel can be in the dugout so if the athletic trainer is located there, they must be team personnel. As such, they are subject to the ban on videotaping by team personnel.

(Rule 5.9.3)

A.R. 5-17. Rule 5.9.8 prohibits cell phone cameras from being used in team areas, but does not speak to cameras on tablets or cameras that are simply cameras. Are those types of cameras also prohibited or only those on cell phones?

RULING: Rule 5.9.8 refers specifically to the use of cell phone cameras. For many years, cell phones have been allowed in team

areas (but not on the field) and once cameras became the norm on cell phones, the prohibition on the camera function was clarified here. Rules 5.9.3 and 5.9.4 address all other team cameras (still photography or video) and specifies they are welcome in team neutral areas, preferably one but comparable ones if two are needed. So if a team wishes to have photos taken, they can do so from the designated team neutral camera area, not the dugout. Note Rule 5.9 refers to electronic equipment used for scouting or by team personnel and does not include cameras for television production.

(Rules 5.9.3 and 5.9.8)

A.R. 5-18. May players wear small portable cameras (e.g., Go Pro) during play in order to provide themselves with postgame feedback?

RULING: Illegal. Although there is valuable feedback to be gained, players may not have cameras attached to their helmets or bodies for their own or television purposes.

(Rule 5.9.3)

A.R. 5-19. At the half inning, a head coach, on the way to the coaches' box, stops behind the plate area to talk to a spectator who is operating the team's radar gun. The coach asks about whether certain pitches from their pitcher were accurately called balls. There was no exchange of scouting information from outside the dugout involving current opponents. The discussion was limited to information about the umpire's judgment of balls and strikes. The coach was not inciting the crowd. Is this allowed? If not, which rule applies to warn the coach to not repeat this action?

RULING: There is no rule to preclude this discussion nor to prevent a coach from talking to a spectator between innings. However, scouting information cannot be obtained and brought in for use and that is very difficult to assess when the coach is speaking quietly to a spectator. If the umpire believes the discussion might be inappropriate, the coach should be reminded of the rule and the expectation that the conversation with the spectator falls within the spirit of the rule.

(Rule 5.9.6)

A.R. 5-20. An institution wants to pipe in artificial crowd noise due to restrictions on fan attendance at their games. What are the restrictions on doing this?

RULING: Artificial crowd noise is permitted during the 2021 softball season under the following stipulations:

(1) Items listed in Rule 5.11, including artificial noisemakers, air horns and electronic amplifiers, may not be part of the artificial crowd noise; (2) Bands are still only permitted to play while the ball is dead as outlined in Rule 5.13; (3) All rules in Appendix F regarding Video, Audio or Matrix Boards must be adhered to, including when music, noise, cheers, etc. may be used and when they must be stopped; (4) The umpires have the authority to regulate and/or eliminate the artificial crowd noise in the event they determine that it is interfering

with the conduct of the game; and (5) Conferences are encouraged to approve the crowd noise being used by its institutions.

(Rules 5.9.8, 5.11 and Appendix F)

A.R. 5-21. A coach or player wears a smart watch onto the field.

RULING: Illegal. Team personnel, including players, are prohibited from wearing or bringing any device capable of transmitting information onto the field other than an exclusively one-way electronic communication device used by the offense or defense to relay the pitch or play call from the dugout or coaches' boxes to the field. When brought to the attention of the umpire by a coach, the umpire shall warn the violator(s) and the head coach (Rule 13.1). If the violator(s) does not immediately comply, the head coach (if within the facility) or the violator(s) (if the head coach is not within the facility) shall receive an administrative ejection (Rule 13.2.1.1).

(Rule 5.9.8)

A.R. 5-22. A coach or player wears a medical device on the field.

RULING: Team personnel, including players, are prohibited from wearing any device capable of transmitting information while on the field (e.g., cell phone, smart watch, etc. other than an exclusively one-way electronic communication device used by the defense to relay the pitch or play call from the dugout to the field). But this rule was not intended to prohibit the wearing of devices necessary due to a medical condition. Monitoring devices (e.g., glucose and heart monitors) required to be worn due to a medical condition are permissible on the field. However, the device and information obtained from it can only be used for medical reasons and not for coaching purposes. The device should be attached in a way that will not interfere with play and, if possible, padded to protect not only the wearer but also their opponents. Medical documentation requiring the need to wear the device should be available to the game umpires and the opposing coach before each game.

(Rule 5.9.8)

A.R. 5-23. In the fifth inning, there's a hard slide into home plate which results in pushing and shoving between both players. Infielders and the on-deck batter quickly come to the aid of their teammates but the umpires, after conferring with each other, eject only the runner and catcher for fighting.

- (1) After the game, the umpires ask the on-site administrator if either team videotaped the game. If yes, could it be made available for their review to be sure no other player should be suspended for fighting?
- (2) A relative of the on-deck batter brings his video to the on-site administrator to deliver to the umpires, which shows involvement of other defensive players.
- (3) The game is using video review.

RULING: Umpires may only review video from television replay, institutional camera or from using the video review protocol in Appendix G.

(1) Legal.

(2) Illegal.

(3) Legal. The crew chief may initiate a review of this play to determine who should be ejected for fighting, and may also review if players left the dugout to participate in a fight.

(Rules 5.9.10, 13.5 and Appendix G)

ARTIFICIAL NOISEMAKERS USE

A.R. 5-24. An institution's promotions staff wants to begin a tradition of having a cannon discharged to celebrate the scoring of runs similar to the celebration they have for scoring in a football game. Is that considered a noisemaker and therefore disallowed? If allowed, must it be fired only when the ball is dead?

RULING: The artificial noisemaker rule does NOT apply to this situation as the rule refers to student-athletes, managers, coaches and athletic trainers and this would be done by or under the direction of game management staff. So, specifically, the NCAA softball rules do not preclude the use of a cannon. That said though, the users should be educated that it should not disrupt the flow of the game nor disrespect the opponent and add a guideline that it may only be used for about 10 seconds once play has ceased following the scoring of runs (paralleling the guideline for bands in Rule 5.13). Dead ball, live ball really doesn't work all that well in that most runs are scored while the ball is live (a batted ball put in play that scores a run is far more common than a dead ball, out-of-the-park home run). After play is over, fire the cannon, and then the next batter steps in the box. Firing it while the ball is being fielded or thrown and a run is scoring would be as inappropriate as waiting until the next batter is getting in the box and preparing to hit. Lastly, as a courtesy to the umpires and opponents, the new tradition should be explained in the pregame meeting.

(Rule 5.11)

RULE 6

The Game

SCORING OF RUNS

A.R. 6-1. Bases loaded, two outs, batter earns a base on balls. Base runner from third base slowly advances to home plate while the base runner from second base aggressively advances to third base, rounds the base and is tagged out. The out at third base happens before the base runner from third base touches home plate.

RULING: Score the run on the live-ball award.

(Rule 6.2.2)

A.R. 6-2. Base runners on second and third bases with two outs. The batter swings and misses strike three but the catcher misses the pitch, allowing the runner from third base to score. The catcher eventually recovers the ball and throws to the pitcher covering home plate who tags out the trailing runner also attempting to score (third out). The batter-runner, thinking the inning was over, advanced toward, BUT did not touch, first base before the pitcher realizes they have a play and throws to first base.

RULING: The play at the plate is the apparent third out. However, the defense may appeal after a third out for an infraction by a base runner who apparently scored, to re-establish the correct batting order and to obtain an inning ending force out to nullify an apparent run. When properly appealed, a dropped third strike is a force out, therefore, the apparent run does not count and the first batter in the next inning will be the player who follows the batter-runner who was out on the dropped third strike.

(Rules 6.2.3.1 and 7.1.3)

A.R. 6-3. With one out and base runners on first and third bases, the batter hits a fly ball that is caught. Each base runner leaves their base before the caught ball is touched. An appeal is made at first base for the third out. The defensive team then makes an appeal at third base before the infielders leave the infield.

RULING: The base runner on third base will then be declared out also, and the run will not count.

(Rule 6.2.4)

A.R. 6-4. With two outs and base runners on second and third bases, the batter singles to right field. The lead runner misses home plate, but the trailing runner (who started on second base) is thrown out at the plate for the third out. Immediately after the play, the defense appeals the lead runner missing home plate.

RULING: The defense is granted an advantageous fourth out which supersedes the tag at the plate and negates the apparent run.

(Rule 6.2.4)

A.R. 6-5. With two outs and base runners on first and third bases, the batter apparently singles. The lead runner scores but the runner from first base misses second base on their way to third base which is where they are thrown out for the third out. The defense correctly appeals the missed base at second even though that runner was already tagged out at third. What is the effect?

RULING: This is an example of an advantageous fourth out. The runner is called out for missing the base to which they were forced and as the third out, that means the run does not score. In addition, because the runner who started on first base did not successfully advance to the first base to which they were forced, the apparent single is actually scored as a fielder's choice.

(Rules 6.2.4, 7.1.1.2 and 14.7.1.3)

A.R. 6-6. With one out and base runners on first and second bases, the batter hits a deep fly ball to the warning track which appears to be uncatchable but is caught for the second out of the inning. The runner from second base misses third base on their way to apparently scoring and the runner from first base fails to tag on the catch before they slide safely into third base. Which is the third out of the inning?

RULING: Upon proper appeal, both runners would be declared out for base running violations and the defensive coach would have the option to select which out would be recorded as the third out. In this case, the logical choice would be the lead runner missing third base in order to negate the apparent scored run.

(Rule 6.2.4)

WINNING THE GAME

A.R. 6-7. In the bottom of the 7th inning, with the score tied 8-8, the home team has the bases loaded. A ball is hit to left-center field with the batter-runner reaching second base and two runs scoring before the play ends and the umpire ends the game. The home team believes the final score is 10-8.

RULING: The rules only award the batter a single and one run scores since the ball remained in play (not a ground rule double or base award, for example). In the bottom of a final inning, the game is immediately over once the winning run scores unless there is an immediate appeal for a violation such as batting out of order or a base runner not advancing to the first base to which they were forced. The final score should be 9-8.

(Rules 6.3 and 14.6.1)

POSITIONS OF THE OFFENSIVE TEAM

A.R. 6-8. When a ball is hit into live play, the offensive team leaves its respective dugout and is not in live ball territory.

RULING: The umpire should warn the violators for the first offense and issue a team warning. If the violator does not comply the umpire should eject them. The next violation by anyone of the warned team will result in the ejection of the head coach.

(Rule 6.5.3)

A.R. 6-9. While on offense, four players leave the dugout and go to dead-ball territory in the spectator area to swing bats in time with the release of the pitch and one player hits a ball attached to a rubberized cord prior to being the on-deck hitter. During pitching changes, they repeat the actions, however, they remain in foul, rather than dead-ball territory.

RULING: The spectator area may not be an appropriate place for players to be swinging bats from a safety perspective, but between innings, the correct rule would be Rule 6.5.3 which allows swinging, throwing, and pitching in a dead-ball area outside the field of play (most often, a bullpen or batting tunnel). During pitching changes, Rules 6.5.3 and 6.5.4 limit players leaving the dugout to engage in these activities on the field of play, except for warm-up swings in foul territory by the batter and on-deck batter, and warm-up running in the foul territory portion of the outfield.

(Rules 6.5.3 and 6.5.4)

A.R. 6-10. Between innings or during a pitching change:

- (1) the offensive team positions themselves along the foul line or in front of the dugout to "watch" the pitcher warm-up.
- (2) the defensive team positions themselves along the foul line or in front of the dugout to prevent the offensive team from watching the pitcher warm-up.

RULING: (1) and (2) **Illegal.** In both cases, the violator(s) and team will be warned the first time the player(s) is illegally positioned and if the violator(s) does not immediately comply, the umpire should eject them. For subsequent violations, the head coach will be ejected.

The rules allow the batter and on-deck batter to take warm-up swings in foul territory and on-deck circle. Other players allowed in the field of play are members of the offense and defense running in the foul-territory portion of the outfield, and the defense throwing and catching in the outfield.

(Rules 6.5.3, 6.5.4, 6.6.5 and 6.6.7)

Positions of the Defensive Team

A.R. 6-11.

- (1) Between innings, the defensive starters position themselves along the foul line or in front of the dugout in lieu of their normal warm-up procedure to prevent the opposing team from watching the pitcher warm-up.
- (2) During a pitching change, the defensive starters position themselves along the foul line or in front of the dugout to prevent the opposing team from watching the pitcher warm-up.

RULING: (1) and (2) Illegal. In both cases, the umpire shall warn the violator(s), and if they do not immediately comply, the umpire should eject them. This also serves as a team warning. The next violation of this rule by anyone on the warned team will result in the ejection of the head coach. **NOTE:** Rule 6.6.5 covers activity which falls outside the scope of warm-up activity. For violations of warm-up activity, the umpire shall apply the effect for Rule 6.6.7.

(Rules 6.6.5 and 6.6.7)

A.R. 6-12. On this particular field, the bullpen is behind center field, so when the visiting team's first baseplayer, who is also the back-up pitcher, wants to keep their arm warm between innings on a cold night, they throw warm-up pitches in foul territory from the edge of the outfield toward the plate. Considering student-athlete welfare, can they be allowed to do so?

RULING: Illegal. The rationale is that the umpires and coaches should not have to dodge balls thrown in a variety of directions in the infield area. However, before the bottom of each inning, they may throw one ball in the infield with another infielder, or since any number of defensive players can be in the outfield with any number of balls so they can throw (or pitch) in the outfield if they choose not to go to the bullpen. Before the top of each inning, they may only throw in the bullpen or dead-ball area.

(Rules 6.6.7 and 6.5.4)

A.R. 6-13. Warm-ups are expressly allowed at the start of the game, between half innings and during pitching changes but can they also occur during a conference or substitution?

RULING: Technically, yes. Although conferences are meant to be brief meeting or teaching opportunities and substitutions should occur without causing long delays, either can be used for warm-ups for players already on the field if done in a way that does not delay play. Note, however, substitutes may not participate in on-field warm-ups and warm-up pitches are not allowed unless a request to an umpire is made and approved.

(Rules 6.6.7 and 6.12)

A.R. 6-14. After the pitcher completes their warm-up pitches, they throw once to an infielder at third base. Is this a violation?

RULING: Legal. The pitcher may throw to any base during the time allowed.

(Rule 10.19.2)

Dead Ball

A.R. 6-15.

- (1) A catcher, who is looking up to catch a pop foul ball, steadies himself by holding the backstop fence to make a legal catch.
- (2) A catcher steadies himself using a pole located inside a dugout that would prevent them from falling into the dugout and hurting themselves?

RULING: (1) Legal.

(2) Illegal.

The rule does not allow the fielder to make contact with any object (including the ground) in dead-ball territory when contacting a live ball.

(Rule 6.9.3)

A.R. 6-16. As a first baseplayer tracks a high foul ball, they come to the edge of the opposing team's dugout to make a catch. Just as they are about to catch the ball at the entrance, players in the dugout reach out to support them from falling down the stairs. Because the fielder is now in contact with dead-ball territory before making an apparent catch, is the catch legal?

RULING: Legal. Although the fielder is in contact with dead-ball territory, the contact was not initiated by them so the catch would be allowed. If they carry the ball into the dugout, catch and carry would apply, but if the opposing players propped them up and they remained in live-ball territory, the ball would remain live.

(Rule 6.9.3)

Conferences

A.R. 6-17. During an offensive conference, the pitcher plays catch with an infielder. Can they throw warm-up pitches or must they throw overhand?

RULING: The pitcher may play catch as long as they are ready to play when the offense and umpires are ready. There is no provision for warm-up pitches (i.e., pitch from the pitcher's plate to home plate) during a conference, so all they may do is throw overhand, sidearm or underhand to a teammate who is not positioned at home plate.

(Rules 6.12 and 10.19)

A.R. 6-18. During a suspension of play for any injury, is it permissible for the offense and/or the defense to talk strategy?

RULING: If a player is injured or apparently injured, an umpire should accompany the team representative to determine if this stoppage of play is indeed for injury. Discussions on strategy or coaching for either team should not take place during this "discovery time" so one umpire should hover and observe the discovery and the other(s) should be attentive to the other coaches and prevent a conference.

If the discovery time noted above is brief and ends in no medical attention needed, it is umpire's judgment as to if both teams can use any time during the suspension. The principle here is no unfair advantage to either team. Examples where no coaching discussions would be allowed are a player quickly getting to their feet and walking off a cramp or catching their breath for a few seconds. However, if it is an obvious injury where the umpire will beckon medical staff, or if it is determined to be an injury requiring some intervention, then yes, while the injured player is being tended to, both the offense and defense can use the time to talk strategy without it being a charged

conference and base runners are not restricted to their bases. In any case, once the medical staff is off the field, the umpires should notify both teams that play will be resuming and if either team is unprepared to continue, it will be a charged conference.

(Rules 6.12.2, 6.12.7.3.2 and 6.12.8.3.2)

A.R. 6-19. The plate umpire is hit with a foul ball and requires time to walk off the injury. The defensive coach and/or a player, without requesting a suspension in play, goes out to talk to the pitcher during the delay.

RULING: Conferences during a suspension of play for an injury would also apply to an umpire's injury which means conference/no conference would be at the discretion of the umpires. Failure to ask if the coach may speak to the defense puts the coach in jeopardy of being charged a conference. In any case, if the umpires are ready to resume play and either team wishes to delay, a conference would be charged to that team.

(Rules 6.12.3 and 6.12.5)

A.R. 6-20.

- (1) A team representative holds a second conference without making a substitution.
- (2) Runners on base switch bases.

RULING: (1) **Illegal.** The team representative requesting the second conference shall be ejected.

(2) **Illegal.** The runners who switched bases and the head coach are ejected.

(Rules 6.12.7, 6.12.8, 7.1.1.5 and 12.9.3)

A.R. 6-21. Following a game-changing play, the defensive head coach comes to the umpire to make a series of substitutions and then meets with the catcher to exchange the insert in their wrist band used for signaling in pitch selection. Is this a charged conference?

RULING: During suspension of play for the administration of a substitution, both teams may hold uncharged conferences provided they are ready to resume play when the umpire has completed the substitution responsibilities. Note that base runners are restricted to their bases during this time unless either team chooses to be charged with a conference.

(Rule 6.12.6)

A.R. 6-22. After seeing their pitcher complete their warm-up prior to the start of the inning, the pitching coach gives the pitcher last minute instructions while the plate umpire is cleaning the plate and before the batter steps into the batter's box. The offensive coach believes the defense should to be charged with a conference.

RULING: Since the pitching coach did not delay play to start the new half inning, this should not be a charged conference. Coaches may remain on the field to talk to the pitcher or defense during warm-up pitches or until the plate umpire is ready to resume play.

(Rule 6.12.7)

A.R. 6-23. An assistant coach sprints on the field for a second conference in an inning and delivers the needed message to the pitcher and fielder(s). The umpire attempts to stop the coach, but is avoided and therefore the assistant coach is ejected. Two batters later, the same thing happens with the same defensive team, another assistant coach sprints out with the same results - delivered message and ejection. What recourse is there to prevent the defense from taking advantage of excess conferences by sending out ancillary personnel to deliver messages and then be ejected?

RULING: Ideally, as a team representative approaches the field for a second conference, the umpire will be able to prevent the excessive conference and, therefore, not have to eject the offender. In the event preventative umpiring does not prevent the situation, the offender should be immediately ejected and every effort made to prevent delivery of any messages sent from the dugout to the field.

Under Rule 4.10, umpires clearly have not only the authority to order a coach to do or refrain from doing an unsportsmanlike act such as this, but also obligates them to conduct the game under conditions conducive to fair play. Therefore, upon ejection of either coach, the head coach may be warned that the willful disregard for the rules will not be tolerated.

(Rules 6.12.7 and 13.1)

A.R. 6-24. Is it a charged conference if a coach comes out to the pitcher's plate to hear the explanation regarding or to question the umpire about an illegal pitch?

RULING: If the initial conversation is between the coach and umpire, it would not be a charged conference even though the pitcher later participated in the conversation. But, if the coach addressed anything other than the illegal pitch (e.g., pitching mechanics or defensive strategy) with any member of the defense, it would be a charged conference. Lastly, if the coach talks first to the pitcher and then to the umpire, it is most likely a charged conference because a coaching conversation occurred.

(Rule 6.12.7)

A.R. 6-25. The defensive head coach comes onto the field to speak with the base umpire regarding a possible obstruction call at second base. The conversation was lengthy, so meanwhile, the team's pitching coach came out and spoke with the pitcher. The latter conversation was concluded and the pitching coach was back in the dugout before the head coach and base umpire's conversation concluded.

RULING: While the conversation between the umpire and defensive coach allows an offensive coach to talk with their players without it being a charged offensive conference (provided they don't leave the vicinity of their bases), it is a defensive conference if another defensive coach chooses to confer with defenders. Although that might appear unfair, the reason for the disparity is the opportunity for abuse. If a

coach wanted to deliver a message to the defense, they would only need to send another representative to ask an umpire a meaningless question and then could deliver the message without using the team's allowable conference. Therefore, to protect the integrity of the game, the defense would be assessed a conference in this case.

(Rule 6.12.7)

A.R. 6-26. A defensive coach engages the umpire in recording position changes by the three outfielders while the pitching coach goes out to talk to the pitcher. The latter conversation was concluded and the pitching coach was back in the dugout before the plate umpire was finished recording and reporting the defensive changes. Just as play was about to resume, the defensive coach tells the umpire to disregard the changes just reported and that the team was reverting back to the original positions.

RULING: Uncharged conferences are allowed during the reporting of substitutions (provided runners do not leave the vicinity of their bases), but the defensive team no longer has made any line-up changes so the plate umpire shall notify the head coach that a conference is being charged. If a conference has previously occurred in the inning, the pitching coach will be ejected if the coach does not retain at least one of the lineup changes initially reported.

(Rule 6.12.7)

A.R. 6-27. The pitching coach holds a conference to confer with the pitcher. During the conference, the third baseplayer puts on a catcher's helmet/mask and the shortstop throws underhand to them near third base. One batter later, the coach switches the pitcher with the shortstop. Can the player who just left the pitching position (and became the shortstop) throw overhand to the first baseplayer or underhand to the third baseplayer who again uses their catcher's helmet/mask while play is suspended for the substitute pitcher (previous shortstop) to throw their warm-up pitches?

RULING: The rules book is silent on the actions of other players while a coach uses the team's allowable conference. Because the throws on the infield did not delay the game and in the interest of student-athlete welfare to allow a player to suitably warm-up, it is allowable. If the substitute pitcher had been on the bench, they would have been able to use the bullpen so they are not getting an advantage another player would not have had. Also, in the interest of student-athlete welfare, the new shortstop may throw during the suspension of play while the new pitcher is throwing their warm-up pitches. That said though, the fielders must be ready to play when the umpire is ready to resume the game.

(Rules 6.12.7 and 8.5.2)

A.R. 6-28. A game goes into extra innings. The defensive coach wants to apply Rule 6.12.7.1 to get an additional charged conference for a pitcher who has not yet pitched in that inning.

RULING: Each team is allowed one charged conference per half inning for each extra inning. Rule 6.12.7.1 does not apply in extra

innings. If they opt to use a charged defensive conference for a new pitcher who has not yet pitched in that inning that will serve as their one charged conference for the extra inning.

(Rule 6.12.7.1)

A.R. 6-29. During a game, the coach (of either the offense or defense) wants to make a substitution very close to the time between innings ending.

RULING: The coach can use a charged conference if the substitution cannot be made in a timely manner. However, an injury would allow a coach to make a change without penalty in this situation.

(Rule 6.12.7.3.2)

A.R. 6-30. Following an offensive conference earlier in the inning, the offensive coach makes a substitution for the batter. After a pitch and before stepping back in the batter's box, the batter asks for time and bolts to the coaching box to talk. The plate umpire cannot get the batter's attention to prevent them from conferring with the base coach for a second conference in the inning.

RULING: The team representative(s) or player(s) who holds another charged conference in an inning shall be immediately ejected so in this case, the batter is ejected.

(Rule 6.12.8)

A.R. 6-31. With no runners on base, the batter hits a double. After the play is over, the defensive players request and are granted a player-to-player conference. The first base coach runs out to second base to give the base runner a piece of gum, and says "good job". The coach for the defensive team believed this constitutes an offensive conference.

RULING: Although play was suspended for the players, it was not a charged defensive conference so the base coach could be charged with an offensive conference when they step across the foul line. By not asking the umpire's approval, the coach is subject to judgment of the umpire on if it is or is not a conference. Had they run out to make an equipment change, such as retrieving a batting guard or to exchange a helmet with a face guard to one without, they would qualify for the exception in Rule 6.12.8.3.2d. But running on the field even just to say good job could constitute a conference.

(Rules 6.12.8 and 6.12.8.3.2d)

A.R. 6-32. When defensive players are charged with a player-to-player conference, the base runners may not abandon the vicinity of their bases, but may the batter confer with the third base coach as long as they are ready to play when the umpire is ready to resume play?

RULING: Yes, the restriction in Rule 6.12.9.4 only applies to runners on base, not to the batter.

(Rule 6.12.9.4)

TIE GAME (REGULATION)

A.R. 6-33. Is the game terminated as a tie game if:

- (1) the game is terminated in the middle of the sixth inning with the score 6-6, but was 4-6 in favor of the home team at end of the fifth inning;?
- (2) the game is terminated in the bottom of the sixth inning with one out and a 6-6 score, but was 6-4 in favor of the visiting team after 5 innings?

RULING: (1) The score reverts back to the last complete inning so the home team would be declared the winner.

(2) The game would be declared a tie because the home team was behind and tied the game in their incomplete half inning.

(Rule 6.15)

TIEBREAKER RULE

A.R. 6-34. Use of the tie breaker in the eighth inning was determined in the pregame meeting. At the top of the eighth inning, the scoreboard mistakenly showed seventh inning and play was normal. Before the home team came to bat in the bottom half of the inning, a tiebreaker runner ran to second base. As soon as the tiebreaker runner ran on the field, the visiting coach argued that since the scoreboard was incorrect and since they did not put a tiebreaker runner on base, the tiebreaker should not be used until the next full inning. What is the right call? Lastly, if the visiting coach noticed the mistake after the top of the inning started, could a tiebreaker runner be placed on second base for whatever remained of the half inning?

RULING: Since use of the tiebreaker in the eighth inning was agreed upon in the pregame meeting, the home coach is allowed to place the tiebreaker runner on base even though the visiting coach did not. It is the coach's responsibility to place the correct base runner on base at the appropriate time regardless of the information on the scoreboard. In not doing so, the visiting coach has disadvantaged their team by not taking advantage of the tiebreaker rule, but the home team should not be similarly handicapped. Although it may appear to be unfair, the home team should not be penalized for a mistake by the visiting team and the decision would not be protestable because it is not contrary to the rules. Even if the visiting team notices the mistake once its offensive half inning has begun, it is not correctable until the start of the next half inning.

(Rule 6.16.1)

CALLED GAME

A.R. 6-35. At the end of five innings, the score is 3-2 in favor of the visiting team. In the top of the sixth inning, the visitors score 3 more runs and lead 6-2. In the bottom of the sixth inning, the home team has the bases loaded with no outs at the time lightning is detected. Due to impending darkness (sunset in ten minutes), the game is called rather than halted. What is the score and what stats are counted?

RULING: The final score is actually 6-2 and all action is recorded as played because reverting back to the last complete inning does not change which team won the game.

(Rules 6.17.2 and 14.32.1)

A.R. 6-36. A team is traveling by bus, has a long drive back to campus, and wants to agree to a mandatory drop-dead time or a time at which no new inning will begin at the pre-game meeting. Is this permissible?

RULING: No. Although a drop-dead or no new inning time must be decided at the pregame meeting, it only applies to air travel.

(Rule 6.17.4)

HALTED AND INTERRUPTED GAMES

A.R. 6-37. In an athletic conference that uses the halted game rule, the home team is ahead 1-0 going into the bottom of the fifth inning. Lightning is detected which halts the game immediately.

- (1) The lightning continued until dark making the resumption of play impossible.
- (2) The game is resumed after a thirty-minute delay but the storm reappears in the top of the sixth inning and continues until dark with the score still 1-0.

RULING: (1) This is an example of a game that is both halted and regulation so because it cannot be continued, regulation takes precedence and the game is declared a victory for the home team.

(2) This is an example of a halted game that is able to be resumed but then becomes halted again before conditions become unplayable. It too is both halted and regulation and declared a victory for the home team in the sixth inning.

(Rule 6.18.4)

FORFEITED GAME

A.R. 6-38. During the middle game of a weekend, three-game series, a player is ejected for leaving the dugout with the intent to join a brawl. In the final game of that series, the suspended player participates in the game. Rather than serving the suspension immediately as required by the NCAA Softball Playing Rules, the player decided to wait for formal notification Monday morning with the intent to serve the suspension in the next day's nonconference game.

RULING: This illegal participation of a suspended player, if discovered during the contest, results in the game being forfeited by the team with the inappropriate participant. (See also Rule 13.13). If the illegal participation by the player is discovered once the contest has ended, the suspension (1) for the student-athlete is two games and (2) for the head coach is four games. Note: By rule, the suspended person must have been informed by the umpire no later than at the end of the game in which the ejection with suspension occurred. If that notice did not occur, a forfeit would not be declared.

(Rules 6.20.1.9 and 13.13)

RULE 7

Appeals and Protests

APPEALS

A.R. 7-1. The runner misses second base by a step, but just touches the corner of third base. The defense appeals that the runner missed third base.

RULING: Even though an appeal is made at third base (the umpire called the runner safe), an appeal may be made at second base on the same runner.

(Rule 7.1.1.2)

A.R. 7-2. With runners on first and third bases and one out, the batter hits a ball down the foul line that rolls all the way to the home run fence. The runner from third apparently scores, the trailing runner arrives safely at third base, but misses second base and the batter-runner misses first base, but safely slides into second base. The defense appeals the two missed bases but does it matter which order they appeal in order to negate the run?

RULING: No, it does not matter because both missed bases were force outs. It is obvious if the lead runner's missed base was appealed before the batter-runner, they would both be force outs but even if the appeals were in the opposite order, the result would be the same. The fact that the base runner from first base was forced to advance at the time they missed the base, makes them out a force as well. With both outs being forces, the run does not score. Note: If a runner is forced to advance at the moment the base is missed, an appeal of that base will always be a force out, but if the base missed was beyond the base to which they were forced, it is a timing play.

(Rules 7.1.1.2, 6.2.3.1, 7.1.1.2.7, 12.11.2 and 14.6.1.3)

A.R. 7-3. Runners on first and third bases with one out. The batter apparently singles to right field plating the runner from third base. The runner who started on first base misses second base but arrives safely at third base. The batter-runner is thrown out at second base trying to advance (second out). The defense appeals that the base runner from first base missed second base (third out). Does the run score since they touched home before the appeal?

RULING: No. Since the third out is a force play at second base, not a timing play, the run does not score. (See also Rule 6.2.3.1.) In addition, because the runner who started on first base did not successfully advance to the first base to which they were forced, the apparent single is actually scored as a fielder's choice.

(Rules 7.1.1.2 and 14.6.1.3)

A.R. 7-4. With the bases loaded and one out, the batter grounds a ball to the shortstop who successfully makes a short flip to the second baseplayer for a force out on the runner who started on first base. The second baseplayer throws the ball out of play beyond the first baseplayer. The batter-runner is awarded second base and the runners who started on second and third bases are awarded home. But the runner who started on second base missed third base and it is properly appealed. Do any runs score?

RULING: On the appeal, the runner missing the base becomes the third out, but the key to the preceding run scoring is whether or not the out at third was a force out. If the runner missed the base before the out at second base, it is a force out and no runs would score. However, if the runner missed the base after the out at second occurred, the force was removed which makes the out a timing play and one run would score.

(Rules 7.1.1.2 and 6.2.3)

A.R. 7-5. With two outs and a runner on third base, the batter-runner puts the ball in play and runs through, but does not touch first base. The runner from third base touches home plate before the first baseplayer tags the batter-runner and appeals the missed base. Does the run score?

RULING: Even though a runner is considered to have touched a base at the time they pass it, the exception is when an appeal is made. Because the batter-runner was out on an appeal of missing first base, it is a force out and the run does not score.

(Rules 7.1.1.2.5b and 6.2.3.1)

A.R. 7-6. After an out-of-the-park home run, the batter-runner misses first base and while between second and third bases, the first baseplayer appeals to the umpire that first base had been missed. The batter-runner, hearing this, retreats to retouch second base, touches first base and completes their base-running responsibilities correctly. The defensive coach argues that the appeal came before the batter-runner touched first base.

RULING: The batter-runner may legally retreat because they had not yet touched the final base of their award. The appeal cannot be ruled on until the player completes their base-running responsibilities, and because they corrected their own error, the appeal is denied.

(Rules 7.1.1.2.6 and 7.1.2.2.3)

A.R. 7-7. Runner on first base takes off on the hit and run. They touch second base and are on their way to third base as the outfielder makes a diving catch for the first out of the inning. The outfielder jumps to their feet and overthrows the ball into the first base dugout (the runner is now half way between third and second bases as the ball leaves the fielder's hand).

RULING: The runner is awarded two bases (second and third bases). But they must return to touch second and first before they may legally finish their award at third base. A runner between any two bases and attempting to return to the base left before a fly ball was first touched can continue. They must be given an opportunity to complete their base running responsibilities before a dead-ball appeal can be made.

Once they touch the final base of their award (third) they may not return.

(Rules 7.1.1.3, 7.1.2.2.3, 7.1.4.5 and Exception)

A.R. 7-8. The defensive team inaccurately lists their pitcher or catcher on the lineup card, when are they considered to have made a play?

RULING: Both throwing and receiving a pitch are considered having made a play. The offensive coach may bring the error to the attention of the umpire and request nullification of the results of the last pitch at any time. Strategy might dictate waiting until the penalty will be more advantageous, however, the defensive team also has the ability to correct its own mistake without penalty.

(Rules 7.1.1.4 and 8.3.2)

A.R. 7-9. The batter hits an out-of-the-park home run but misses home plate. The catcher appeals to the umpire that the runner missed home.

RULING: During an out-of-the-park home run, the ball is dead and all runners must be allowed the opportunity to complete their base-running responsibilities before a dead ball appeal can be made (Rule 7.1.2.2.3). The runner who misses home must be given sufficient time and show immediate intention to return to touch—solely as judged by the umpire. Examples of sufficient time given with no immediate intention to return include, but are not limited to: actively celebrating after passing the plate; continuing to move away from home plate when they reasonably could have recognized that they missed home; or otherwise showing no indication that they intend to return. Umpires should remain alert and observe the runner to determine when to rule on an appeal by the defense.

(Rule 7.1.1.2.5)

A.R. 7-10. Bottom of the seventh inning, two outs, tie score. The batter in the sixth spot in the batting order (average hitter but slow base runner) is scheduled to bat, but the coach sends the batter in the ninth spot (fastest base runner on the team) to home plate with instructions to strike out for the third out. The defensive coach notices batting out of order, but waits to see the result of their turn at bat.

RULING: Even though the defense got the strikeout as the third out, the team may appeal batting out of order to correct the batting order for the eighth inning when the tiebreaker was to begin.

(Rule 7.1.3)

PROTESTS

A.R. 7-11. Can a coach protest misapplication of a ground rule?

- (1) A drainage area or other hazard that is ruled out of play during the pre-game meeting with coaches, but when a play occurs in that area, the umpire allows play to continue.

- (2) On a playing field where an imaginary out-of-play line is established by the umpire during the pre-game meeting, but a coach knows it to be incorrect, then waits for a play to occur in order to challenge the ruling.

RULING: Yes, a coach can protest any misapplication of a rule, even an established ground rule.

(1) The offensive coach may protest that the effect for the established ground rule was not applied.

(2) While a misapplication of a rule is protestable, it is probably in both coaches' best interest to have the effect corrected at the pregame meeting when it is first discovered to be incorrect. Both teams are equally vulnerable to application of an incorrect effect so there is no competitive advantage in withholding the information.

(Rule 7.2)

A.R. 7-12. With one out and base runners on second and third bases, the batter flies out. The base runner on third base tags up after the catch, but the base runner on second base does not. The base runner on third base clearly crosses home plate before the ball is played at second base for the third out. The umpire does not allow the run to score.

RULING: The questions as to whether the base runners left their bases before the catch and whether the play at second base was made before the base runner on third base crossed the plate are solely matters of judgment and are not protestable. However, it is a misapplication of a playing rule and a proper subject for protest if the umpire fails to allow the run to score on the timing play.

(Rule 7.2.3)

A.R. 7-13. Top of the 5th inning, two outs and runners at second and third. #3 is due up as the next batter listed on the lineup card. #8 bats instead and hits a single. Two runs score. Defensive coach protests before the next pitch. The plate umpire reviews the offensive team's lineup and verifies that #3 should have batted, not #8. The umpire crew uses the rules book to verify their decision. #3 is declared out, the improper batter's action is nullified and the runs do not score.

RULING: Correct. All protests must be resolved at the time they occur. If the umpires cannot adjudicate the protest, they are to call the Secretary-Rules Editor to render a decision. No games will be played "under protest."

(Rule 7.2.5.3.5)

RULE 8

Players and Substitutes

PLAYERS ON A TEAM

A.R. 8-1. In the resumption of a halted game, one team is using DP/Flex but has exhausted all available substitutes. The left fielder becomes incapacitated during warm-ups. Does that mean the game is immediately forfeited or may play begin shorthanded?

RULING: The affected coach has two options. If the coach does not want to play, a forfeit is declared at the pregame meeting when it is determined the team does not have a left fielder to enter on the line-up card. The other option is to enter the DP to play left field (they will continue to bat in their same spot of the batting order, so there is no substitution). The original left fielder is still in the batting order, but is otherwise in the dugout being attended to by the medical staff. When the left fielder's spot in the batting order comes up, they could enter the batter's box, assuming they are physically capable of doing so. They can stand in the box and take pitches without the intent to get on base, but if their spot in the order is unfilled, the team will have to forfeit as there is no provision for playing shorthanded. In this case, the forfeit does not actually occur until the spot in the batting order comes up because there is the possibility the player will be able to recover to play or the game would be stopped for some other reason before that spot comes up (such as the mercy rule invoked, inclement weather, an action of the opponent that halts the game).

(Rule 8.1.1.2)

A.R. 8-2. A team has used all its listed substitutes when the third out of the top of the seventh inning is made by the catcher who is ejected for an unsporting comment made to the umpire following a strikeout. The DP is able to enter the game to catch the bottom of the seventh inning, but there is no legal substitute to enter in the batting order for the catcher.

RULING: At the time of the ejection, the coach must give the plate umpire a substitute for the ejected player. Unlike the situation in A.R. 8-1 when the team had a complete lineup, in this situation, there is no one available to occupy the catcher's spot in the batting order, therefore, the game would end in forfeit. Unlike other codes, NCAA softball does not allow a team to play shorthanded.

(Rules 8.1.1.2 and 13.6.1)

A.R. 8-3. The second baseplayer is located closer to first base than the first baseplayer who is playing in and away from the foul line for a slapper.

RULING: They are not considered to have different defensive positions; however, if the catcher and first baseplayer exchange positions, they are considered to be unreported substitutes if the umpire is not notified.

(Rule 8.1.2)

A.R. 8-4. Has there been a defensive position change in any of these cases?

- (1) The first baseplayer plays directly behind second base (up the middle) and the defense doesn't position anybody in the first baseplayer's traditional position.
- (2) The same alignment as in the previous example, however, the person who was the third baseplayer is behind second (up the middle) and the person who was the first baseplayer is where the traditional third baseplayer is.
- (3) The right fielder moves to shallow left field, the left fielder moves to deep left field and right field is left vacant.

RULING: (1) There has been no change. By rule, the first baseplayer can be positioned anywhere in fair territory. This is a positioning issue rather than a reportable change.

(2) This is an example of a change that must be reported - the first and third baseplayer have switched positions. If not done, apply the effect for Rule 8.1.2.11.

(3) This is a positioning issue similar to the first example rather than an exchange of positions.

Note: In the interest of accuracy and giving players credit for their play, it would be helpful if coaches always informed the umpire of positioning changes and defensive switches so there would never be a rule violation. However, by rule, coaches must only report the switching of defensive positions or substitutions that involve a player not currently in the lineup.

(Rule 8.1.2.11)

DESIGNATED PLAYER/FLEX

A.R. 8-5. If the starting DP gets on base and is replaced by the Flex to run the bases twice in a single game, the DP is then unable to play for its remainder (starter who has re-entered). If that spot (the one the DP originally occupied but the Flex currently holds) in the batting order comes up again, may the coach substitute for the DP even though there has been no one in that position for some time or must they substitute for the Flex?

RULING: Once the starting lineup is created with a DP and Flex, those positions exist throughout the game even if one of them is temporarily vacant or inactive. The Flex who entered the game to run for the DP is still the Flex and retains all those rights. The DP position still exists and a substitute may be entered in that spot in the batting order, and the Flex would return to playing defense only. The coach may decide whether to substitute for the DP or Flex based on which player is needed in the lineup or which starter should retain their reentry rights but whatever the reason, it is imperative the coach

articulates which player the substitute is for and that that decision is clearly passed along to the scorer and opposing coach.

(Rule 8.2)

A.R. 8-6. The Flex enters the game in the clean-up spot in the batting order for the DP at the start of the game dropping the number of active players in the game from 10 to nine. Two innings later, the coach wants to return to 10 players by entering a substitute into the clean-up spot in the batting order but coach does not want the substitute to go into the lineup as the Flex. Must the coach reenter the starting DP into the clean-up spot and then put the substitute in for them or can the coach put the substitute directly in the DP spot that the Flex is vacating when they go back to playing defense only?

RULING: The substitute may be entered directly into the clean-up spot in the batting order without having to re-enter the starting DP. The number of active players in the game can go from 10 to nine and back to 10 any number of times, but the number of spots determined on the lineup card at the pregame meeting is either nine or 10 and does not change.

(Rule 8.2)

A.R. 8-7. One team begins the game with the DP/Flex. Does the Flex have to play defense at all times or can the Flex sit on the bench for the first three innings and then come in and play defense in the fourth inning?

RULING: The Flex is listed in the tenth spot on the lineup card in any defensive position and can be defensively replaced by the DP (which puts the Flex on the bench). At some later time, they can re-enter the game to play defense only or they can re-enter defensively for themselves and offensively for the DP.

(Rule 8.2)

A.R. 8-8. When are the DP and Flex charged with a substitution?

RULING: The DP and Flex are charged with a substitution when they are not doing what they are designed to in the lineup. When the DP is out of the batting order or when the Flex is not playing defense, the player will be charged with a substitution.

(Rule 8.2.4)

IMPROPER PLAYER

A.R. 8-9. A team lists two players as F8 and no one as F9 on the lineup card. An opposing batter hits a fly ball to F8 which is caught. The offensive coach brings the situation to the attention of the plate umpire. In order to get the maximum penalty, should the coach have waited until F9 made a play and then appealed?

RULING: This situation should not happen since the coach has looked over the line-up for accuracy as has the plate umpire. So it should be rectified with no penalty at the pregame meeting. But assuming it was not, if brought to the attention of the umpire at the time of the catch by the center fielder, the lineup card will accurately reflect the player's name and it will say F8 - nothing wrong. But, if the right fielder makes a play and it is immediately brought to the

umpire's attention, then the effect in Rule 8.3.2 would apply because there is no right fielder listed on the lineup card.

(Rule 8.3.2)

A.R. 8-10. A starter is wearing uniform number 7 and is listed correctly in the hand written lineup, but is listed as number 18 in the pre-printed roster on the bottom of the card.

RULING: The hand written lineup would take precedence and in this situation, a correction to the pre-printed roster would be made but no other action. However, if the player were a substitute or if the numbers were reversed (they are wearing number 7, are listed on the written lineup as number 18, but on the printed lineup as 7), that becomes an inaccurate lineup card.

(Rule 8.3.2)

A.R. 8-11. A team does not list first names of its players on its lineup card as submitted to the umpires at the pre-game meeting. Later in the game, one of its players hits a two-run home run which causes the opposing coach to immediately bring the inaccurate lineup to the attention of the umpire. Should the umpires have returned the lineup for correction at the pre-game meeting (preventative umpiring) or waited to enforce the penalty when brought to their attention?

RULING: If the umpires notice any required information (e.g., no first name, DP without a Flex, no substitutes) was omitted from the lineup card, the card should be returned and corrected without penalty at the pregame meeting. If though, it went unnoticed, the umpires would enforce Rule 8.3.2 when the violation is brought to their attention.

(Rule 8.3.2)

A.R. 8-12. Immediately after the pregame meeting, a coach privately informs the plate umpire that he is going to protest the spelling of one of the opposing player's last names on the lineup card at some time during the game. The player's name is spelled incorrectly on the hand written lineup, but is correctly printed on the roster at the bottom of the lineup card. Since the error has been brought to the umpire's attention, is it corrected immediately (without penalty) or not acted upon until the coach requests action? Second, since the name on the roster is correct and there is only one person with this last name is it still an inaccurate lineup?

RULING: Although the hand written lineup takes precedence over the printed roster if there is a discrepancy, this is a case where the result might be determined by the confusion caused by the mistake. If there are two players on the team named Smith and Smyth and the name on the card is written Smyth, the possible confusion makes the card inaccurate. But if Jones is misspelled Janes and they are the only player whose name starts with J, the handwritten line-up causes no confusion. The benefit of the doubt should go to not penalizing the team if no confusion results or if the writing is difficult to read but the roster at the bottom of the lineup card is clear. As to the timing,

the umpire should ask the coach if he is now bringing this to the attention of the umpires for action or not. If yes, it can be corrected immediately without penalty, if no, then it can be corrected by the offending team anytime or the coach may bring it to the umpire's attention when it best advantages his team.

(Rule 8.3.2)

A.R. 8-13. A coach substitutes #5 for #20 at bat, but #5 is wearing their road uniform which is #6. On the first pitch to the substitute batter, the runner on first base steals second base. When the ball is returned to the pitcher, the opposing coach informs the umpire that #6 is batting although #5 was the reported substitute.

RULING: When substitutions are made they should be #5 Smith for #20 Jones and as the umpire makes the change on the lineup card, the discrepancy will be noticed and the substitution not allowed without correction of either the number or name. In the unlikely event that it is still undetected, using this process does establish that the substitute was Smith for Jones which in fact is what happened on the field and makes the violation an inaccurate lineup. Smith was reported and is playing; they simply have the wrong number on the lineup card. However, if there is both a #5 and #6 available to play and no names are reported at the time of the substitution, then having #6 in the game when #5 was reported is a misreported substitute and subject to Rule 8.3.3. In either case, the advance of the runner is legal.

(Rules 8.3.2 and 8.3.3)

A.R. 8-14. Both teams present lineups at the pregame meeting with the DP/Flex properly listed and the pitcher listed as the Flex. No lineup changes are reported and the game begins with the home team's DP in the pitching position. The first pitch is called a ball, the second pitch resulted in a ground ball out to the shortstop. The offensive coach brings the unreported entry to the plate umpire's attention.

RULING: The pitcher is considered having made a play when they deliver a pitch so the effect is "No Pitch" and the last play is nullified resulting in the leadoff batter returning to the batter's box with a 1-0 count. **Note:** The pitcher and catcher are considered having made a play when they pitch and catch respectively so the same result would apply if it were the catcher, rather than the pitcher, who was unreported.

(Rule 8.3.3)

A.R. 8-15. #2 is the runner on second base, #1 is on first base with no one out. The offensive coach reports a substitution of #4 to run for #2 and as the umpire administers the change, the coach talks to the batter, the substitute and the original two base runners. When the offense breaks the huddle, #4 replaces the trailing runner (#1) instead of lead runner (#2) as reported. What is the remedy when properly appealed before the next pitch?

RULING: The remedy will depend on the question posed to the umpire by the defensive team. If the defense asks "is #2 supposed to

be at second base?" You have an unreported reentry. #4 was officially reported as a substitute for #2 however #2 can reenter for their own substitute (assuming they had not been out of the game already). Impose the penalty for unreported player as determined by the time of the report. If the defense asks "is #4 supposed to be at first base?" #4 is an illegal player. They were not a starting player and were officially entered as a substitute for #2. They cannot enter the game a second time (as a substitute for # 1) so impose the penalty for illegal player as determined by the time of the report. If the defense asks "are both players incorrect?" impose both penalties as determined by the time of the report.

(Rules 8.3.3 and 8.3.4)

A.R. 8-16. #2 is the runner on second base with no one out. The offensive coach reports a substitution of #4 for #2. The umpire repeats it, records it on the lineup card and announces the change to the defensive coach. After the next pitch, the defensive coach notices the runner on second base is #5 (not #4 as reported) and brings it to the attention of the umpire.

RULING: #4 has been officially entered into the game and #5 is an unreported substitute for them which renders #4 out of the game permanently (as a substitute without reentry rights). The effect is no pitch; the unreported player is out and declared officially in the game. Although there is no one on base, #5 remains in the lineup and #2 retains their reentry rights if they were a starter.

(Rule 8.3.3)

A.R. 8-17. At the start of the bottom of the 8th inning of a game using the tiebreaker rule, the offensive team places unreported substitute #31 at second base. After the first batter strikes out and #31 is still at second base, the next batter #17 hits a 2-1 pitch to the outfield which scores #31. The batter-runner #17 is thrown out sliding into third base for the second out. Prior to the next pitch, the defensive team reports #31 as an unreported player. What is the ruling?

RULING: The unreported player #31 was the runner placed on second base in the tiebreaker and a pitch had been thrown. They had advanced at least one base and were reported by the defensive team before a pitch was thrown after the advance. Per Rule 8.3.3.4.2, "no pitch" is declared, #31 is called out and declared officially in the game and all other play is nullified. Therefore, the out on #17 at third base is nullified, they are returned to bat with a 2-1 count, two outs, and no base runners.

(Rule 8.3.3.4.2)

A.R. 8-18. In the bottom of the fifth inning, the leadoff batter singles safely to center field. Before the next pitch, the defensive head coach notifies the plate umpire that the batter was listed as the left fielder but actually played center field the previous half inning. The coach contends inaccurate lineup applies. Is that true?

RULING: The player batted in the correct spot in the batting order, their name and uniform number were correctly listed, however, their defensive position was incorrect for where they played the previous half inning. The player has made an unreported exchange of their defensive position. To gain the maximum effect, the opposing coach should wait until the player makes a play on defense. But in bringing it to the umpire's attention while the player was at bat, the effect is they are declared in the game (playing center field).

(Rule 8.3.3.5.3)

A.R. 8-19. In the fourth inning, #4 comes off the bench to bat in #1, the first baseplayer's spot in the batting order. #4 triples and before a pitch to the next batter, #1 re-enters. On the first pitch, they are picked off third base, ending the inning. As the pitcher is warming up, the opposing coach sees that #4, who has no reentry rights, is warming up the infielders at first base as #1 is talking with the third base coach. Apparently #4 came out on their own so as soon as the coach and #1 are done talking, #4 leaves the field and #1 resumes their position playing first base. Since the ball was dead, is there any penalty? Second, if #4 became an illegal substitute when they took warmup throws at first base, does their illegal reentry result in #1 being out of the game?

RULING: Since the coach did not mistakenly report #4 returning and since the ball was not live, there is no illegal substitution; #1 was legally re-entered as the runner on third base and is still in the game. It is not illegal for a player to go to take throws at first base or catch warm-up pitches while the player in the lineup gets ready between innings as long as there are no more than four infielders (to meet Rule 6.6.6).

(Rules 8.3.4 and 6.6.6)

A.R. 8-20. The Flex bats in a spot in the batting order other than the DP's spot and before the next pitch, the defense appeals to the umpire for a batting out-of-order violation. They are correct in that the Flex is not the correct batter but they are an illegal player, not a legal player guilty of batting out-of-order. Should the umpire act on the appealed batting out-of-order or enforce the penalty for illegal player?

RULING: A coach making an appeal must reasonably identify the rule violation in question. While not required to identify the rule by number or page, the player and terminology for the rule in question have to be correctly communicated to the umpire. To avoid miscommunication, the plate umpire should show the defensive coach the lineup card and have them walk through the complaint giving the coach every opportunity to see the mistake and better articulate the appeal. In the unlikely event that the coach still only appeals batting out-of-order, the plate umpire shall enforce the effect for the appealed batting out-of-order.

(Rules 8.3.4 and 11.9)

SUBSTITUTE PLAYER

A.R. 8-21. In mid-inning, the defensive coach makes a substitution for the catcher (straight substitution; no injury) followed immediately by an offensive

substitution of a pinch hitter. The substitute catcher comes on the field and asks to receive warm-up pitches during the plate umpire's paperwork. The base umpire grants the request and the pitcher throws two warm-up pitches. The offensive coach objects to the two pitches and demands two balls be assessed for illegal warm-up pitches.

RULING: Without an injury, there is no rules book support for allowing warm-up pitches to an incoming catcher during a substitution without the standard consequence of awarding balls to the batter. However, the plate umpire shall not set aside the decision of the base umpire to allow the additional pitches and therefore there is no penalty for this apparent rule violation. (See also Rule 7.3.1.)
Note: The substitute catcher would be allowed to play catch while the plate umpire was administering the substitution because it is the pitcher who is restricted from throwing warm-up pitches during the substitution paperwork.

(Rule 8.5.1)

A.R. 8-22. Without being reported, a substitute steps into the batter's box for the clean-up hitter to start the second inning. Before a pitch is thrown, the coach decides to substitute a different player for the clean-up hitter. Is this still a substitution for the clean-up hitter or is it now a substitution for the substitute who entered the batter's box?

RULING: Because the player who stepped in the batter's box was unreported and no pitch had been thrown, they never officially entered the game. Therefore, when the coach reports a change, the substitution would be for the clean-up hitter.

(Rule 8.5.1)

A.R. 8-23. Prior to the start of a half inning, the offensive coach reports two line-up changes to the plate umpire - the leadoff batter in the inning will now be #11 for #1 and the third batter will be #12 for #2.

RULING: The umpire should accept the reported changes. Any player may be substituted for at any time when the ball is dead. Substitutes are not required to enter the game at the time the substitution is reported to the plate umpire.

(Rules 8.5.1.1 and 8.5.1.3)

A.R. 8-24. A coach reports a substitute for the right fielder as #1 for #3 in the top of the third inning. The umpire wrote the substitution as #9 for #3 on the lineup card and reported that to the opposing team before pointing to right field for the official scorer to pick up the change. The right fielder catches a pop fly for the apparent second out of the half inning at which time the offensive head coach brings the misreported substitution to the plate umpire's attention. The plate umpire immediately recognizes the mistake in informing the offensive coach of #9 for #3 when the defensive coach reported #1 for #3. However, the lineup card has the mistake recorded (#9 for #3). Should the defense be penalized for the acknowledged mistake of the umpire or can the lineup card be changed to reflect what the coach reported?

RULING: By rule, the lineup card is official so although the umpire made the mistake, it was compounded by the coach not verifying the change requested was actually the change accepted and recorded. It is in the coach's best interest to clearly articulate the name and number of the substitute and the player they are replacing and then verify that the desired change has been recorded on the lineup card. If a mistake then happens in informing the opponent or official scorer, it would be unfortunate but because the substitution was correctly recorded on the umpire's lineup card, the desired change would be official.

(Rule 8.5.1.2)

A.R. 8-25. With a base runner at third and one out, the batter hits a sacrifice fly which is caught for the second out. The base runner from third leaves early and apparently scores. The offensive coach enters a pinch hitter. The defensive coach then successfully appeals that the base runner from third left early, and they are ruled the third out ending the half inning. The offensive coach now doesn't want the pinch hitter since they are going on defense. Does the substitution stand?

RULING: Rule 8.5.1.2 states that a substitute is officially in the game when the change has been reported to, accepted, and recorded by the plate umpire on the lineup card. This situation, however, is an exception to that rule. The offensive coach should be allowed to rescind the substitution. This change was made prior to the appeal which ends the inning and the decision to use a pinch hitter is different than if no appeal had been made. However, had this not been the third out the substitution would stand. The spirit and intent of the rule would allow umpires to cancel a substitution that is basically meaningless.

(Rule 8.5.1.2)

CONCUSSION/MEDICAL REENTRY

A.R. 8-26. Starting player #12 Smith is involved in a play that results in contact with a base runner. As a result of the contact, #12 Smith is exhibiting signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion and is immediately removed for a medical evaluation. #6 Roberts enters as the temporary replacement player. In the next inning, #12 Smith is cleared by appropriate medical personnel to return to the game and resumes their spot in the lineup from #6 Roberts. What is the status for each of these players for the remainder of the game?

RULING: #12 Smith returns to play with full starter rights. They can be withdrawn and reenter again. #6 Roberts, the temporary replacement player, can be used as a standard substitute in that same spot in the lineup because they had not used their eligibility prior to being used as the temporary replacement player. Neither #12 Smith nor #6 Roberts are charged with a substitution/reentry in this concussion evaluation situation.

(Rules 8.6.2, 8.6.2.1 and 8.6.2.2)

A.R. 8-27. Substitute #23 Kline comes into pinch hit for a starter and is involved in a collision. As a result of the collision, #23 Kline is exhibiting

signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion and is immediately removed for a medical evaluation. #10 Thompson enters as the temporary replacement player. Later in the game, #23 Kline is cleared by appropriate medical personnel to return to the game and resumes their spot in the lineup from #10 Roberts. What is the status for each of these players for the remainder of the game?

RULING: #10 Thompson, the temporary replacement player, can be used as a standard substitute in that same spot in the lineup because they had not used their eligibility prior to being used as the temporary replacement player. Neither #23 Kline nor #10 Thompson are charged with a substitution/reentry in this concussion evaluation situation. **Note:** While #23 Kline is being evaluated, #10 Thompson can be replaced by the reentering starter or by another substitute. Both #23 Kline and #10 Thompson still retain the rights they had under the concussion protocol.

(Rules 8.6.2, 8.6.2.1 and 8.6.2.2)

A.R. 8-28. Starter #33 Miles, a player diagnosed with diabetes, is exhibiting signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) and is immediately removed at the request of a primary athletics health care provider. #15 Smith enters as the temporary replacement player. Later in the game, #18 Valdez enters the lineup in #15 Smith's spot while #33 Miles is still receiving a medical evaluation. What is the status for each of these players for the remainder of game?

RULING: #15 Smith can be used as a standard substitute in the same lineup spot because they had not used up their eligibility prior to being used as the temporary replacement player. #18 Valdez is treated as a standard substitute, so if #33 Miles or another eligible substitute replaces #18 Valdez in the lineup, #18 Valdez is done for the game. If #33 Miles is allowed to return to the game, they retain full starter rights. Neither #33 Miles nor #15 Smith are charged with a substitution/reentry in this medical evaluation situation.

(Rules 8.6.2, 8.6.2.1 and 8.6.2.2)

A.R. 8-29. #3 Shifflett, the starting DP, is exhibiting signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with asthma and is immediately removed at the request of a primary athletics health care provider. #5 Shumaker enters as the temporary replacement player. Later in the game, while #3 Shifflett is still receiving a medical evaluation, #19 Barlow, the starting Flex, enters the DP spot in the lineup currently occupied by #5 Shumaker and the lineup goes from 10 to 9 players. What is the status for each of these players for the remainder of the game?

RULING: #5 Shumaker can be used as a standard substitute in the same lineup spot because they had not used up their eligibility prior to being used as the temporary replacement player. If #3 Shifflett is allowed to return to play, they retain full starter rights. If they go back to 10 players in the lineup, the Flex #19 Barlow retains full rights. Neither #5 Shumaker nor #3 Shifflett are charged with a substitution/reentry in this medical evaluation situation.

(Rules 8.6.2, 8.6.2.1 and 8.6.2.2)

A.R. 8-30. #25 Culler, the starting DP, is hit in the head in their first at bat. As a result of the contact, #12 Smith is exhibiting signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion and is immediately removed for a medical evaluation. #2 Hall enters as the temporary replacement player and runs for #25 Culler at first base. When the spot in the batting order comes around again, #2 Hall gets a hit and reaches base. The Flex then replaces them as a pinch runner. What is the status for each of these players for the remainder of the game?

RULING: #2 Hall, the temporary replacement player, can be used as a standard substitute in the same spot in the lineup for the remainder of the game because they had not used their eligibility prior to being used as the temporary replacement player. If #25 Culler is allowed to return to play, they retain full starter rights. Neither #2 Hall nor #25 Culler are charged with a substitution/reentry in this concussion evaluation situation. The Flex player retains the rights of the Flex position.

(Rules 8.6.2, 8.6.2.1 and 8.6.2.2)

A.R. 8-31. #2 Walker, the starting DP, is exhibiting signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion and is immediately removed for a medical evaluation. Instead of using a temporary replacement player, starting Flex #25 Hyde enters the DP spot and the lineup goes from 10 to 9 players. What is the status for each of these players for the remainder of the game?

RULING: #2 Walker, the starting DP, has left the lineup and is only allowed to resume their position in the lineup one time if they are cleared to return to play. They have not used a temporary replacement player. Other players can continue to be substituted for either of these players and standard substitution rules will apply. They can also return #25 Hyde to the Flex position and return to 10 players in the lineup. Hyde retains full rights as the Flex.

(Rules 8.6.2, 8.6.2.1 and 8.6.2.2)

A.R. 8-32. #9 Terry, a base runner, is involved in a collision with a defensive player. They remain on the ground after the collision and are exhibiting signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion. Neither team has medical personnel present at the time of the collision. (1) Who may clear a player removed for a possible concussion evaluation to return to play? (2) Can they be replaced by a temporary replacement player?

RULING: (1) Only appropriate medical personnel may clear a player to return to play after being removed for exhibiting signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion (See Appendix H). (2) Yes. While medical personnel may not be present at the event, all school-sponsored athletic contests should include an Emergency Plan that includes the presence of or planned access to a physician for prompt medical evaluation. Staff should contact available medical personnel about the need for immediate medical evaluation and #9 Terry must be replaced. If #9 Terry is the DP, the Flex may enter their spot in the lineup. The lineup now goes from 10 to 9 players. If appropriate medical personnel clears them to return to play, #9 Terry may return to the lineup. Neither #9 Terry nor their temporary replacement

player are charged with a substitution/reentry in this concussion evaluation situation.

(Rules 8.6.2, 8.6.2.1 and 8.6.2.2)

RULE 9

Defense

NO HUDDLE DEFENSE

A.R. 9-1. After a routine defensive play by the shortstop, the third and second baseplayers go over to slap gloves with them.

RULING: The purpose and intent of the no huddle defense rule is not to delay the game after an out. Actions that are quick, don't delay the start of the next batter at bat and don't constitute "meeting on the mound or elsewhere on the field" are allowed. A team may huddle after an out if time is stopped for an injury or a coach to umpire discussion. After an outstanding defensive play or strikeout, teams may have a quick high five or other celebratory action as long as it is immediate and they're ready to go when the next batter gets to the plate. A team may still request a player-to-player conference after an out for the catcher to discuss strategy with the pitcher, but it also will be charged a player-to-player conference. The plate umpire still must ensure the pace of play and flow of the game in this situation. The infield may huddle after an error, but this will be a charged player-to-player conference.

(Rules 9.1 and 6.12.9)

CATCH

A.R. 9-2. A fielder makes a shoestring catch and immediately lifts their glove in the air over their head to show the umpire that they have possession of the ball. As they do so, the ball trickles out the palm of their glove and lands on the ground. Since release was not voluntary, is it still a catch?

RULING: Yes, because the ball landed on the ground as a result of a secondary move and not as part of the action of the catch, they have completed the catch. Secondary moves include throwing the ball, transferring the ball from glove to throwing hand and demonstrating possession of the ball to the umpire.

(Rule 9.2.1)

A.R. 9-3. An outfielder straddles the line marking dead-ball territory waiting to catch a fly ball. As the ball is descending, the player lifts the foot that has been in dead-ball territory into the air as they make a catch.

RULING: This is a legal catch.

(Rule 9.2.2.3)

A.R. 9-4. An outfielder crashes through the temporary home-run fence, rights himself on the other side and then runs back onto the warning track to catch a fly ball.

RULING: If the outfielder brings both feet back into the outfield before contacting the batted ball, it is a legal catch.

(Rule 9.2.2.4)

A.R. 9-5. While tracking a sky-high foul ball, the shortstop runs into a chalked, dead ball area created for photographers along the third base sideline fence. They jump in the air, and catch the ball as it drifts over the sideline fence.

RULING: No catch, foul ball because the defender was in dead ball territory and never reestablished himself in live ball territory before gloving the batted ball.

(Rule 9.2.2.4)

NO CATCH

A.R. 9-6. An outfielder, trying to catch a batted fly ball near the home run fence, has the ball in their glove, subsequently knocks down the portable fence and loses possession of the ball as they land on the displaced fence.

RULING: It is not a catch since the fielder was not making a secondary move nor did they control and voluntarily release the ball (the ground caused the ball to be dropped). The ball was over the fence in fair territory when it hit their glove so it is a home run. In specific circumstances, the umpire could judge that the fielder had control of the ball long enough to establish a catch. For example, a fielder making the catch, taking a step or two and falling over a short fence thus dropping the ball as they attempt to "catch themselves" and protect their face. While the release was not voluntary, the catch was completed before going out of play and making a secondary move of trying to protect themselves. In this situation, the catch would be good, the batter would be out, the ball would be dead, and all runners would be advanced one base from the time the ball entered dead-ball territory on the catch and carry.

(Rules 9.3, 9.4 and 9.2)

A.R. 9-7. The batter hits a ground ball fielded and thrown to first base. The first baseplayer catches and has control of the ball while in contact with the base. Almost immediately after the catch and as the umpire is declaring the batter-runner out, the batter-runner unintentionally knocks the ball out of the first baseplayer's glove.

RULING: There is room for judgment as to how immediate the ball was knocked out of the glove and whether or not the contact appeared intentional. And there's rule support for either an out or safe call. In order for a force out to be recorded, the first baseplayer must control both the ball and their body demonstrating possession at the time of contact with the base. However, if the ball is dislodged and release was not voluntary nor a secondary move, the batter-runner would be safe.

(Rules 9.3.2 and 12.10.2.1.2)

A.R. 9-8. A fielder catches a batted fly ball with their toes on an elevated step to a dugout (which has been determined to be out of play in the pregame meeting) and with their heel hanging over, but not touching the ground, in live-ball territory.

RULING: No catch.

(Rule 9.3.5)

CATCH AND CARRY

A.R. 9-9. With a runner on first base, the ball is hit to the third baseplayer who overthrows first base. The ball rolls in foul territory and stops right before the out-of-play chalk line at the entrance to the dugout. The right fielder, standing in foul territory, picks up the ball but fumbles it out-of-play. What is the base award?

RULING: Apply the catch and carry rule. Most often, both the batter and base runner are awarded one base from the base last legally touched at the time the fielder fumbled the ball out of play. However, two bases should be awarded if the umpires believe the fumble was intentional to prevent the run from scoring.

(Rule 9.4)

A.R. 9-10. With runners on first and second bases, a towering fly ball is hit near the temporary 4-foot home-run fence. The runners both advance half way to their next base and hold, waiting to see if the fielder will make a catch. The outfielder makes the catch but then tumbles over the home-run fence carrying the ball out of play. Both runners advance on one base awards but never tagged up after the catch and are now standing on second and third bases.

RULING: Unless properly appealed for failing to tag when a fly ball is caught (see Rule 7.1.1.3 and 12.9.2 Note), the base runners are on their proper bases for violation of the catch and carry rule.

(Rules 9.4, 7.1.1.3 and 12.9.2)

OBSTRUCTION

A.R. 9-11. With a runner on second base, the batter hits a dying line drive between the shortstop and third base. The ball settles in for a hit. The base runner hesitates to see if the ball goes through, hesitates again and then advances toward third base. The base umpire also hesitates and as he begins to move, there's contact between the umpire and runner who is then thrown out at third base. The batter-runner safely attains second base.

RULING: Although there are some rule references to umpire interference, there are no references to umpire obstruction when the offense is disadvantaged. While the contact is unfortunate, there is no rule relief so the base runner would be out as a result of the play and the batter-runner safe at second base.

(Rules 9.5 and 9.6.1.3 Note)

A.R. 9-12. With no outs and a runner on second base, the batter singles to right field. As the runner approaches home plate, the catcher is positioned awaiting the throw without possession of the ball and (1) Straddling the third-base line a

few feet in front of home plate, or (2) completely blocking the leading edge of home plate. The runner does not alter their path

RULING: These are obstruction if, in the umpire's judgment, the catcher's position without the ball hindered the runner's ability to score. The determination is not based on whether the runner visibly altered their path, but on whether the fielder without possession dictated what part of the plate was available during the critical moments of the play. Runners choose their own path; the defense may not force a path by blocking the leading edge prior to possession.

If the catcher blocks any portion of the leading edge before gaining possession, the umpire must be alert to potential obstruction. Gaining possession of the ball shortly thereafter does not negate the prior blocking if the runner's opportunity to score was affected. Obstruction may be overlooked (Rule 9.5.2 Note 3) if the umpire judges that the runner's ability to reach home was not hindered (for example, if the tag is applied before contact or deviation occurs).

When in doubt, and no other rule clearly outweighs it, the benefit of the doubt should go to the runner.

(Rules 9.5.2 Note 3)

A.R. 9-13. Rule 9.5.2 Note 3 states that blocking the leading edge of a base without the ball is obstruction "unless the runner's ability to reach the base is not hindered." How is "not hindered" interpreted?

RULING: With respect to blocking the leading edge, "not hindered" is interpreted to mean that the runner was in the final moments of their chosen path to the base, and that the fielder moved from a legal, non-blocking position into a blocking position only slightly ahead of the play, yet still completed the tag without any additional contact or other action that impeded the runner's progress.

Conversely, a runner is considered "hindered" when a defensive player without possession — or who gains possession after already blocking — blocks or restricts access to the leading edge, thereby dictating what part of the base or plate is available during the critical moments of the play. Runners decide their own path; the defense may not force a different path by blocking unless the fielder had possession of the ball prior to establishing the blocking position.

(Rule 9.5.2 Note 3)

A.R. 9-14. With a base runner on second base, the batter hits a line drive single to right field. The catcher, anticipating that the runner will try to score, sets up in a position not blocking the leading edge of home plate. As this runner from second is rounding third base, the right fielder throws the ball home. The throw is offline, and the catcher has to move from the legal setup position to catch this errant throw. As the catcher reacts to the trajectory of the throw: 1) the catcher makes contact with the runner coming home before they catch the ball in their glove; 2) the catcher alters the path of the runner coming home, but in the umpire's judgment they did not impede the runner's path to the plate; 3) the catcher secures the ball in their glove before tagging the runner with the ball.

RULING: In 1), the catcher is charged with obstruction for not having the ball in their possession when contacting the runner. In both (2) and (3), the catcher's action to react to the trajectory of the thrown ball is legal and has not obstructed the runner.

(Rule 9.5.2)

A.R. 9-15. With a base runner on first base, the batter hits a ground ball to the second baseplayer who fields it and throws the ball to second base to attempt a force out. The shortstop covering second base has a foot touching the leading edge of the base and is waiting to receive the throw. The play is close and there is no contact between the base runner and the fielder. Is this obstruction for blocking the leading edge of second base?

RULING: No. While Rule 9.5.1.2 prohibits a fielder from setting up in a position that blocks any portion of the leading edge of a base without possession of the ball, the intent of the rule is to limit collisions and ensure that a runner always has a clear path to the base. Although obstruction can occur on force or tag plays, a force play (or live ball appeal for leaving a base before a caught fly ball is touched) where the throw is coming from the same relative direction as the runner will almost always require the fielder to be in contact with the leading edge of a base. Not allowing this traditional positioning would create an unfair competitive disadvantage for the defense and is not in spirit with the rule.

In plays such as those described above, umpires should ignore obstruction for blocking the leading edge of a base when they judge that the runner would have clearly been put out and the apparent obstructing position of the fielder had no bearing on the play.

(Rules 9.5.1.2a and 9.5.2 Note 4)

A.R. 9-16. The batter, in their pre-pitch stance, holds the bat straight across the plate and then brings it back to their shoulder to swing. On the play in question, they bring it back as the pitch is reaching the plate and in doing so, tips the catcher's glove.

RULING: The primary principle is that the batter is entitled to one unobstructed swing at any pitch so if that is their normal motion, the catcher must stay back and allow them to bring their bat backward and then swing. That said, the play described is a timing play with the effect determined by the location of the pitch at the time of the contact. The batter is protected prior to the pitch reaching the plate or on their attempt to contact the pitch which means contact during those times would be catcher obstruction. However, the catcher is protected after the pitch reaches the plate or if the batter was trying to draw an obstruction call while taking the pitch which means contact during those times would be batter interference.

(Rule 9.5.3)

A.R. 9-17. Can an offensive team decline the base award and accept a strike on the batter when catcher obstruction occurs? For example, if the team's best

hitter is at bat with a runner on third base and the coach wants that batter to hit rather than be awarded first base.

RULING: Yes, the offensive coach can choose the result of the play or the award of first base to the batter. So if the result of the play is a strike, the batter could still be in the batter's box with the strike assessed.

(Rule 9.5.3)

A.R. 9-18. The batter takes a stride position at the front of the batter's box and, as the pitch is delivered, moves their rear foot backward toward the catcher to reclaim the batter's box from the catcher who has legally moved forward. If there is batter-catcher contact, which player is penalized?

RULING: Since the only possible reason for striding backward is to hinder the catcher, this action is inconsistent with the spirit of the game and should not result in rewarding the batter. Note: The catcher may not obstruct, hinder or prevent the batter's legitimate attempt to make contact with a pitch so movement by the batter that enhances their ability to contact the pitch is protected and results in catcher obstruction. The benefit of the doubt must go to the batter.

(Rules 9.5.3 and 11.2)

A.R. 9-19. A batter swings at a pitch so late that the ball is in the catcher's glove when bat/ball/glove contact is made.

RULING: This is a judgment call with the overriding principle that the batter is allowed one unobstructed swing at the pitch but tempered with the timing of the contact. If the catcher anticipates the pitch and reaches forward to catch the ball while it is over the plate, it is catcher obstruction. If the catcher catches the pitch well behind the plate and the purpose of the swing is to impede the catcher or the batter is so badly fooled by the speed of the pitch, that is batter interference. The goal is to penalize the violator but in the unlikely event both players are acting appropriately, it also could be simply a strike with no penalty.

(Rules 9.5.3 and 11.18)

A.R. 9-20. Two outs with a base runner on second base on a base hit to the outfield. The base runner is obstructed rounding third base. The ball is thrown to home plate (even though there was no play) and on the throw, the batter-runner attempts to advance to second base but is thrown out for the third out of the inning.

RULING: The base runner is awarded home plate, and the run scores if the umpires judge they would have scored but for the obstruction.

(Rule 9.5.4)

A.R. 9-21. Runners are on first and second bases with no outs when a ground ball is hit into the pitcher's circle that the pitcher fields and throws to third base for the force out. As the pitcher fields the ball, the shortstop (who is moving to field the ball near second base) and the base runner from second base inadvertently collide, causing the lead runner to fall to the ground and

eventually be retired at third base. Is there interference on the runner for running into a fielder as they moved to field the ball even though the ball is cut off before getting to them or is the shortstop guilty of obstructing the base runner?

RULING: This rule protects the defender fielding the ball, which means any other fielder impeding a runner would be obstructing. In this case, because the pitcher was fielding the ball, they are the protected player so the shortstop is most likely guilty of obstruction and the runner would be awarded the base(s) they would have earned had obstruction not occurred. But obstruction is not the only possibility depending on the speed of the play and positions of the players. There is the possibility of a no call for inadvertent contact when the shortstop is the player likely to field the ball even though the pitcher miraculously snags it and both the defender and runner are acting appropriately.

(Rules 9.5.4, 12.18.2.1.5.4 and 12.18.2.6)

A.R. 9-22. With runners on first and second bases with two outs, the batter hits a ground ball to the fence in right field. The lead runner is obstructed going home as the throw is coming to the plate (they would clearly have scored). However, they inadvertently collide with the third baseplayer and can only manage to scramble safely back to third base. Meanwhile, the throw to the plate gets by the catcher. The catcher retrieves the ball and throws to third base in time to tag out the trailing runner who is also on third base. Can the run score on the base award even though there are three outs?

RULING: Even though the trailing runner is the third out, the lead runner scores on the base award for obstruction (the base they would have reached had there been no obstruction), and the batter-runner is left on base at the end of the inning.

(Rule 9.5.4)

A.R. 9-23. With a runner on second base, the batter hits a base hit to left field. As the base runner is rounding third base, they inadvertently collide with the third baseplayer and, instead of advancing towards home or returning to third base, they just stop and are tagged out.

RULING: The correct call is obstruction but the base award will be based on umpire judgment.

(1) If the runner rounded third base in the traditional play of rounding a base to evaluate the defensive play, then the effect of obstruction would be to negate the putout and award the runner third base. The runner did not make it apparent that they intended to advance home, they merely rounded the base. In these cases, the runner is awarded only the base they held prior to the putout and the effect for violation of Rule 9.5.4.7 is assessed (i.e., warning and advance on subsequent violations).

(2) On the other hand, if the runner rounded third base and their actions demonstrated their intent to continue to home, then the effect of the obstruction would be to negate the out and award the runner

home. In this case, the runner's action must convince the umpire they intended to advance by clues such as aggressively rounding the base, the speed of the play, their body language and/or by the effect of the contact. If they were obstructed in their pursuit of home (the runner gets the benefit of doubt), award the additional base.

(Rule 9.5.4)

A.R. 9-24. With a base runner on second base and two outs, the batter singles to the outfield. The base runner from second base inadvertently collides with the third baseplayer but eventually progresses home. As the throw comes into the infield, it is cut off in the circle and a play is made on the batter-runner attempting second base. The third out is made at second base before the obstructed runner touches home.

RULING: On the obstruction call, the runner is awarded the base(s) they would have reached had there not been obstruction. If the umpire judges the runner would have scored before the third out was made, the run would score. If the umpire judges the runner would not have scored until after the tag at second, the run shall not score. Note: This is only possible on a timing play and would not be the case if the third out was a force out.

(Rule 9.5.4)

A.R. 9-25. A runner is obstructed sliding into a base. They overslide the base, lose contact with it, and are apparently tagged out.

RULING: A runner who is obstructed sliding into a base cannot be tagged out if they overslide the base losing contact with it. The act of obstruction awards them this base. The oversliding is viewed as part of the runner's action that was obstructed.

(Rule 9.5.4)

A.R. 9-26. The first baseplayer has been warned for rounding obstruction in the previous inning. The batter hits a ground ball in the gap and as they round first base to see if they can advance, they are obstructed by the first baseplayer. The base umpire signals obstruction and mentally judges where the batter-runner would have advanced had obstruction not occurred.

- (1) The batter-runner returns to first base which is the base the umpire judged they would have reached;
- (2) The batter-runner safely slides into second base which is the base the umpire judged they would have reached; and
- (3) The batter-runner boldly attempts third base, is easily thrown out and the umpire judged they would have only reached second base.

RULING: (1) At the conclusion of the play, the umpire will award the batter-runner second base as the effect for a subsequent obstruction violation by the first baseplayer;

(2) The batter- runner safely advanced to the base the umpire judged they would have reached had there not been obstruction and because it was one base beyond the base where they were obstructed, there is no additional award; and

(3) The batter-runner is out and there is no effect for the subsequent rounding obstruction. The batter-runner was only protected to second base but chose to attempt an additional base.

(Rules 9.5.4 and 9.5.4.7)

A.R. 9-27. The batter takes the pitch as their teammate is stealing second base. The catcher's throw is just to the shortstop side of the base, however, with the second baseplayer covering the bag, the ball sails into center field. The runner, looking over their shoulder at the ball, decides to attempt third base but trips over the stretched out second baseplayer who is still on the ground from their attempted (but failed) diving stop. The runner gets up and is thrown out at third base on a close play. Is the second baseplayer guilty of obstruction?

RULING: Yes, the fielder is not in possession of the ball nor in the act of fielding a batted ball when the runner was impeded.

(Rule 9.5.4.1)

A.R. 9-28. The runner on first base is stealing on the first pitch to the next batter. The throw from the catcher is slightly right of second base but is secured by the shortstop before the runner reaches the base. As the runner slides into the shortstop, they dislodge the ball but become tangled up with the shortstop. As the shortstop is lying on top of the runner, they reach for the ball, secure it and tag the runner who is unable to reach second base. Is the shortstop guilty of obstruction?

RULING: Yes, the shortstop is not protected from an obstruction call because they are not in possession of the ball nor in the act of fielding a batted ball.

(Rule 9.5.4.1)

A.R. 9-29. The base runner is stealing second on the pitch. Prior to being in possession of the ball, the shortstop is partially blocking second base.

- (1) The runner slides and makes contact with the shortstop's leg, who then catches the ball and tags the base runner.
- (2) The runner slides safely into second base.

RULING: In (1), obstruction will be ruled. A fielder not in possession of the ball nor in the act of fielding a batted ball shall not impede the runner. The ball is dead at the time of the apparent put out and the runner is awarded second base, which is the base they would have reached had there been no obstruction.

In (2), the runner was not impeded and therefore the ball remains live and the runner is safe.

(Rule 9.5.4.1)

A.R. 9-30. If the first baseplayer obstructs the batter-runner either rounding or returning to first base, would they still be warned even if the batted fly ball was caught?

RULING: If the player who obstructed the batter-runner is the same player who caught the ball for a putout, they would not be guilty of obstruction because they were fielding the batted ball. If the player who obstructed is not the same as the one who caught the fly ball,

then issue the warning to them for the unnecessary contact. Either way though, the putout stands.

(Rule 9.5.4.7)

A.R. 9-31. On a fly ball to right field which is eventually caught, the batter-runner rounding first base is obstructed by the first baseplayer, #14. A warning for rounding obstruction is issued to #14. Later in the game, #14 again obstructs the batter-runner rounding first on a caught fly ball to center field.

RULING: The effect for Rule 9.5.4.7 says a subsequent violation after a warning for rounding obstruction by the same individual results in a one-base award to the obstructed runner. However, Rule 9.5.8.7 allows for an obstructed batter-runner running to first base to still be called out when they hit a fly ball that is caught. The intent of Rule 9.5.4.7 is to prevent runners from being needlessly hindered rounding a base, preventing them from running in their desired path and reading the play to decide whether to advance. In this play, the batter-runner is not hindered from advancing since the fly ball is caught, and the plate umpire will rule the batter-runner out on the catch and the subsequent obstruction is ignored.

(Rules 9.5.4.7, 1.5, 4.10.4.2 and 9.5.8.7)

A.R. 9-32. With a runner on first base, the batter hits a long fly ball to deep left field close to the foul pole. The base runner advances watching for the catch while the second baseplayer moves to second base, also watching for the catch. The runner attempts to round second base, but is obstructed by the second baseplayer. Immediately after obstruction is signaled, the left fielder misses the catch and the ball falls foul in the corner.

RULING: At the time of the contact, it is a delayed dead ball and obstruction call. Then once the ball is dead, the base runner is returned to first base (the base they would have attained had there not been obstruction), a warning is issued to the second baseplayer and their coach is notified. Even though the ball ended up being an uncaught foul ball, the unnecessary contact does result in a warning.

(Rule 9.5.4.7)

A.R. 9-33. The third baseplayer obstructs a runner returning to third base; their first violation in the game. Immediately after the play, a pinch runner is inserted and a pitching change is made which resulted in the warning being forgotten and not given to the third baseplayer. After the half inning ended, the umpire realized no warning had been given so issued it then to the coach and player. Is this a correctable error or if the warning is not given in a timely manner, is it no longer valid?

RULING: In the unfortunate circumstance that the warning was not given immediately, it should be given as soon as possible because subsequent obstruction violations will result in a base award. Ideally, the player and coach know and will adjust positioning but the umpire's warning is important because it clarifies the type of obstruction called and the effect of subsequent violations.

(Rule 9.5.4.7)

A.R. 9-34. With a runner on second base, a base hit to left field sends the runner toward home plate. The throw from the outfield is high, causing the catcher to jump to catch it and the runner to run by home plate rather than slide. The catcher was unable to catch the throw and the runner missed home plate. After several strides, the runner stops, turns and as they return to touch home plate, the catcher steps in front of them, blocking the entire plate. The pitcher retrieves the errant throw at the backstop and throws the ball to the catcher to apply a tag before the runner can touch home plate. The catcher is clearly guilty of obstruction but does the returning obstruction listed under fielder obstruction apply (Rule 9.5.4.8) or because it was the catcher, is the rule violation catcher obstruction?

RULING: The correct call would be under fielder obstruction because the catcher was acting as a fielder at the time. The runner was legally advancing and attempting to correct their initial mistake of missing home plate when the catcher obstructed them. Since a play was being made on the runner in this situation, the catcher is not given a warning for obstruction on the returning by the runner.

(Rule 9.5.4.8)

A.R. 9-35. A runner leads off first base. The catcher throws the ball to the first baseplayer who attempts to tag the runner while off the base, but obstructs the runner in the process of trying to tag them. The umpire also issues a warning to the first baseplayer.

RULING: The ball becomes dead if the base runner is tagged out or at the conclusion of the play. The defensive player will be charged with obstruction, the runner is safe at first, but there is no warning given to the first baseplayer for “returning obstruction” since a play was being made on the base runner.

(Rules 9.5.4.1 and 9.5.4.8)

A.R. 9-36. Two outs with runners on first and third bases. The runner from first base delay steals and arrives safely at second base. However, on the infielder’s first and third play, the shortstop takes the flip from the second baseplayer and, with excessive force, pushes the runner off second base. The base umpire signals obstruction as the shortstop freezes the lead runner and then, seeing the runner at second rolling on the ground and off the base, tags them. At the time of the tag, the lead runner from third base is more than halfway to home. The base umpire declares the ball dead on the tag, then awards the runner second base on the obstruction and awards home to the runner from third. The defensive coach argues that it cannot be obstruction because the shortstop had the ball, that the out should stand, and the run voided because it occurred after the tag (which was the third out).

RULING: The umpires made the correct call in awarding the affected runner the base they would have had had they not been forcefully pushed off the base and in scoring the run from third since that runner was more than halfway at the time of the apparent putout. Note that the effect in Rule 9.5.6.2 also specifies that the offender, the shortstop, be ejected for using excessive force.

(Rule 9.5.4.9)

A.R. 9-37. A runner is advancing toward home plate and there is a play at the plate. The catcher drops the thrown ball. The catcher picks up the ball in their bare hand and shoves the runner with their glove to prevent the runner from touching home plate. What is the ruling?

RULING: Obstruction. Delayed dead ball is signaled. If the runner is tagged out, the ball is declared dead. At the conclusion of the play the runner is awarded home. In addition, the umpire shall issue a warning to the catcher and notify their coach. Subsequent violation of the same rule by that player shall result in a one-base award to the obstructed runner and each other runner forced to advance. If this contact is deemed to be flagrant, also apply Rule 9.5.6.2 and eject the catcher.

(Rules 9.5.4.9 and 9.5.6.2)

A.R. 9-38. How can detached defensive equipment interfere with a pitch? Wouldn't it always have to be on a batted ball?

RULING: With a runner on second base, the batter swings and misses a low, outside pitch. The pitch is knocked down by the catcher but rolls a few feet to their right. The catcher, watching the runner to prevent them from attempting to advance, whips off their mask and uses it to drag the ball toward their glove. The proper effect for this use of detached equipment is to award the runner third base.

(Rule 9.5.5)

A.R. 9-39. With a base runner on first, the batter hits a ground ball toward second base. The base runner, running to second, is obstructed by the first baseplayer who does not have a reasonable chance to field the ball. The umpire signals delayed dead ball. The contact by the first baseplayer (1) pushes the base runner directly into the path of the ball, or (2) knocks the base runner to the ground. The base runner is unavoidably hit by the batted ball as the second baseplayer is in position to field it.

RULING: An obstructed runner committing an act of interference is one of the times when they may be called out between the two bases where they were obstructed. However, in this play, if the umpire judges that the interference was a direct result of the obstruction and could not be avoided, penalizing the offense would unfairly advantage the defense. The ball is dead at the time of the apparent interference. The batter-runner is awarded first base and credited with a fielder's choice, and the base runner is awarded second base since they are forced to advance.

(Rules 4.10.5, 9.5.4.6, 9.5.8.3, 9.5.12, 12.13.7.1, 12.18.2.1.1 and 14.6.1.5)

A.R. 9-40. A base runner who leaves second base too soon on a touched fly ball is returning after the ball is caught and is obstructed between second and third bases.

RULING: If the base runner would not have returned safely to second base before the throw arrived, they would remain out.

(Rule 9.5.8.2)

A.R. 9-41. A base runner who leaves second base too soon on a touched fly ball is advancing toward third base when they were obstructed.

RULING: The base runner is protected between the two bases where they were obstructed even if they are attempting to return to tag.

(Rule 9.5.8.5)

A.R. 9-42. With a base runner on first base, the batter singles to right field, and the base runner attempts to advance to third base. The ball is quickly fielded and the base runner, realizing they will not be safe at third base, stop and get in a rundown. During the rundown, the batter-runner advances to second base, while the base runner remains in a rundown and is eventually obstructed diving back into second base, where they are apparently tagged out.

RULING: The base runner is awarded second base on obstruction and the batter-runner first base, crediting them with a base hit.

(Rule 9.5.10)

A.R. 9-43. With a base runner on first base, the batter hits a line drive that goes through the infield but the base runner, thinking the line drive will be caught by an infielder, attempts to dive back into first base and is obstructed.

RULING: Award the base runner second base and the batter-runner first base, crediting them with a base hit. A warning will be issued to the fielder who obstructed the runner on this returning play.

(Rule 9.5.9)

UMPIRE INTERFERENCE

A.R. 9-44. With a runner on first base, the batter bunts the ball in front of home plate. The catcher fields the ball and is just about to throw when the plate umpire knocks the ball out of the catcher's hand while pointing to indicate the ball was fair. Is that umpire interference even though the rule regarding umpire interference specifically refers to only pick offs and steals?

RULING: If the umpire contacts any fielder playing a batted ball, the ball is live and interference is not ruled. The exception is contact between the umpire and catcher on an attempted steal or pickoff that might result in interference. Because this situation is a batted ball, the exceptions do not apply, the umpire is considered part of the field and play continues.

(Rule 9.6.1)

A.R. 9-45. The plate umpire inadvertently interferes with the catcher's attempt to throw out a runner stealing second base. The runner is not put out so the umpire immediately declares the ball dead and returns the base runner to first base, but what happens to the pitch?

RULING: The noncontacted pitch is either a ball or strike because the interference happened after the pitch was complete.

(Rule 9.6.1.3)

A.R. 9-46. The batter hits a pitch to the home run fence, but as they round first base, they collide with the base umpire and both fall to the ground. Before

the batter-runner can get up to advance, the ball is thrown in from the outfield and the batter-runner who is still on the ground, is tagged out.

RULING: If the ball is live when an umpire and runner collide, it remains live and play continues until its normal conclusion which, in this case, is the tag out. If the pitch had been hit out-of-the-park, the batter-runner would still be responsible for touching all bases following the collision or would be vulnerable to an appeal.

(Rule 9.6.1.3 Note)

EQUIPMENT BLOCKED BALL

A.R. 9-47. With two outs and base runners on first and second bases, the batter hits a hard one-hopper to the shortstop. The ball lodges in the web of the glove

RULING: If the glove with the ball can be tossed to the second or third baseplayer for a possible out, the ball is live and play allowed. If there is no play, the ball is declared dead, and base awards apply.

(Rules 9.7.3 and 12.13.6.4)

FAIR BATTED BLOCKED BALL

A.R. 9-48. A shoe falls off a player and is struck by a batted ball which then deflects away from the fielder.

RULING: If the shoe belongs to a base runner, it is loose offensive equipment (see Rule 12.18.3.6). If it belongs to a defensive player, it is considered loose defensive equipment (see Rules 9.9.1 and 12.13.3).

(Rules 9.9, 12.13.3 and 12.18.3.6)

LIVE THROWN BLOCKED BALL

A.R. 9-49. On a completely enclosed field with gates to the dugout, the plate umpire reminds coaches during the pregame meeting to keep the dugout gates closed during play. The gates are closed at the beginning of a play with a runner on second base. The batter hits a ball that rolls all the way to the home run fence. The runner attempts to score as the relay throw is off line and headed toward the dugout gate. As the runner is about to score, a player opens the gate and the ball rolls through it and into the dugout. What is the effect?

RULING: If the ball went through the open gate into the offensive team's dugout and:

(1) If the offense was acting properly (i.e., the on-deck batter coming to the on-deck circle), penalize the defense for the errant throw by awarding the batter-runner two bases from the time of the throw and the base runner is awarded home.

(2) If, however, the offense was not acting properly (i.e., opened the gate as the ball started rolling in that direction), declare dead ball and place the batter-runner and base runner at the base last touched when the ball crossed the dugout opening.

If the ball went through the open gate into the defensive team's dugout, there is no situation when the defense would be acting properly and open the gate so if they were guilty of this unsporting

act, declare dead ball and award the base runner home and the batter-runner the base they would have reached had the unsporting act not occurred which must be a minimum of two bases from the time of the throw.

(Rule 9.10.1)

PITCHED BLOCKED BALL

A.R. 9-50. A pitched ball is rolling on the ground as the catcher, while trying to retrieve it, accidentally kicks the ball into dugout. Is it still a pitch with only a one base award? Does it matter if the pitch is no longer is moving when there's contact with the catcher?

RULING: It is considered a pitch until it becomes a batted ball or is thrown by the catcher. The award to base runners would be one base and it does not matter if the ball, at the time of the contact with the catcher, was moving or stationary.

(Rule 9.11)

RULE 10

Pitching

TAKING THE SIGNAL

A.R. 10-1. (1) The pitcher is standing behind the pitcher's plate and looks at their signal arm band or one-way communication device for a signal. (2) The pitcher has their pivot foot in contact with and their entire stride foot outside the 24-inch length of the pitcher's plate and looks at their signal arm band or one-way electronic communication device or to the catcher who, by their hand/arm movements, apparently gives the pitcher the signal.

RULING: (1) **Legal pitch.** The pitcher is permitted to look at their signal arm band or one-way communication device prior to being positioned on the pitcher's plate without penalty. Once in legal position on the pitcher's plate, pitchers must follow Rules 10.2.2 and 10.2.3 in taking a signal. (2) **Illegal pitch.** Once the pitcher makes contact with the pitcher's plate, the pitcher must take the signal in the position described in Rules 10.1.1 and 10.2.1 (that is, hands apart, ball in one hand, pivot foot in contact with and within the 24-inch length of the pitcher's plate, stride foot on the ground in/on the 24-inch length of the pitcher's plate or its backward extension and the hips in line with first and third bases).

(Rules 10.1, 10.2, 10.2.2 and 10.2.3)

A.R. 10-2. The pitcher is in the proper pitching position as described in Rules 10.1 and 10.2. In this position, the pitcher looks at their signal arm band or one-way electronic communication device or to the catcher who, by their hand/arm movements, apparently gives the pitcher the signal. The pitcher then repositions their stride foot by moving it to another position, brings their hands together and begins the pitch. Is this a legal pitch?

RULING: **Illegal pitch.** The proper pitching position as defined in Rules 10.1.1 and 10.2, including the position of the stride foot, must be established before taking the signal. Once the pitcher takes the proper pitching position required for taking the signal, initially sets the toe of their stride foot, and takes the signal, they may not move that foot in any direction (backward, forward, sideways or off the ground) before starting the pitch. The first legal movement of the stride foot is the forward step when the pitching motion starts. However, once the pitcher has established their stride foot, simply dropping or rocking onto their heel is not a violation. This required position alerts the batter and umpire that the pitcher is about to bring their hands together, separate the hands, and deliver the pitch.

(Rules 10.1.1, 10.2.1, 10.5.1 and 10.5.2)

A.R. 10-3. The coach gives a signal visually, verbally or through a one-way electronic communication device while the pitcher is behind the pitcher's plate.

RULING: Legal. While behind the pitcher's plate, the pitcher is allowed to receive a signal, whether from the dugout, catcher, signal arm band or one-way communication device without penalty. Once the pitcher assumes the legal pitching position, they must give, take or appear to take the signal. The pitcher may not simply step into the pitching position, put their hands together and start the pitching motion. There must be timing consistent with taking the signal from the dugout, catcher, signal arm band or one-way communication device. Failing to do so will result in an illegal pitch.

(Rule 10.2.2)

A.R. 10-4. May a pitcher who wants to call their own game give rather than take a signal?

RULING: It is uncommon, but yes, as long as the pitcher complies with all aspects of Rules 10.1 and 10.2. Rule 10.2.2 states, "while in the pitching position and taking the signal, the pitcher must give, take or appear to take a signal. The signal need not come from the catcher". If the pitcher is wearing an arm band or one-way electronic communication device, by looking at it while in the pitching position, they are taking the signal. They may then shout the numbers to the catcher and defense, or they can shout the numbers to the catcher who can relay them visually or verbally. If the pitcher is not wearing an arm band or one-way electronic communication device, they would then need to give visual or verbal signals to the catcher, and the pitcher must then "appear" to take the signal, perhaps by looking in to the catcher. Note, however, similar to the more common scenario where the pitcher receives the signal from the catcher or dugout, the pitcher may not look at their arm band or one-way electronic communication device, nor otherwise take or give the pitch signal, while not in the pitching position. The intent of the taking the signal rule is to allow the batter and umpire time to prepare for the pitch.

(Rules 10.1 and 10.2)

A.R. 10-5. The pitcher steps on the pitcher's plate with their pivot foot and has stride foot set, their hands separated, and gets the sign from the dugout. They then bring their hands together, pause, look to the catcher or their signal arm band or one-way electronic communication device and receive additional signs. Is this additional apparent sign illegal?

RULING: No. The first part satisfies the requirements in Rule 10.2 for taking the signal. They must pause with their hands together for not more than five seconds, but the rule does not specify what else they can do during that time so, yes, they can receive additional signals during those five seconds.

(Rule 10.2)

A.R. 10-6. The pitcher, who is wearing a signal arm band, positions both feet in contact with the pitcher's plate and gets the signal from the dugout. They have

their hands separated and at their sides with the ball in their throwing hand. After receiving the signal, using the hand holding the ball, they reach over to their opposite wrist and use their finger to help locate the signal on their arm band. They then drop their hands back to their sides. Is this legal?

RULING: Yes, their hands are not considered to have separated after coming together to start the pitch when they are using one hand to assist with finding a signal on their opposite wrist. The intent of Rule 10.3, which defines when a pitch begins, is to let the batter and umpire know that the pitch is imminent. There is no possibility that either the batter or umpire would think this act is the hands coming together to start the pitch. However, while in the pitching position, it would not be legal for the pitcher to hold the ball in their glove while they use their throwing hand to find the signal, and then transfer the ball from their glove to their throwing hand and bring their hands back to their sides. This would constitute an illegal pitch.

(Rules 10.2 and 10.3)

STEP/STRIDE

A.R. 10-7. The pitcher begins their pitch by lifting their pivot foot straight up into the air (without reducing the distance to home plate) and bringing it right back down onto its original spot on the pitcher's plate. They then take a step forward toward home plate.

RULING: This footwork is illegal. The pitcher may not lose contact between the pivot foot and pitcher's plate without it being considered the one allowable step/stride.

(Rule 10.5.1)

A.R. 10-8. After legally taking the signal, the pitcher rocks back onto the heel and begins the initial step/stride. As the pivot foot transitions from heel to toe during forward movement across the pitcher's plate, this action produces a momentary, slight separation between the pivot foot and the surface of the plate commonly referred to as "clearing the cleats." Is this legal?

RULING: Rule 10.5.3.3 permits natural heel-to-toe or toe-to-heel rocking during the step/stride, and this rocking motion may occur simultaneously with the forward movement of the pivot foot. A minimal, incidental separation over the plane of the pitcher's plate, resulting solely from this action, is not considered lifting.

(Rule 10.5.3)

A.R. 10-9. During the pitcher's delivery, they drag their pivot foot along the ground and prior to releasing the pitch, bear weight on it again.

RULING: This is considered a replant and is illegal. The pitcher may not gain a second starting point and push off their pivot foot, whether they hopped (off the ground) or dragged (on the ground) to that second point.

(Rule 10.5.5)

BALL DROPPED DURING PITCH

A.R. 10-10. The pitcher drops the pitch:

- (1) While taking their sign from the catcher and before bringing their hands together;
- (2) And it rolls out of the circle during their delivery.

RULING: (1) It is a live ball with no award to the batter but base runners may advance with liability to be put out since the pitcher no longer has possession of the ball in the circle.

(2) It is a live ball, base runners may advance with liability to be put out. If it will reach the plate, the batter may hit it. If the batter does not have a reasonable opportunity to hit the pitch, the defense may retrieve it and a ball is awarded to the batter. If the batter would have had a reasonable opportunity to hit the pitch but the defensive player retrieves it, obstruction is ruled, the ball is dead and the batter and all other base runners are awarded one base from the time of the pitch.

(Rule 10.7)

ILLEGAL PITCH

A.R. 10-11. With a base runner on first base, an illegal pitch is thrown which the batter hits for a double to the outfield. The base runner rounds third base and heads home, but they are thrown out at home plate. Since the batter-runner reaches second base safely and the base runner advances two bases before being thrown out, is the effect for the illegal pitch cancelled?

RULING: The base runner advanced at least one base and the batter-runner reached first base safely so the result of the play stands with no option given for the illegal pitch.

(Rule 10.8)

A.R. 10-12. With two outs and no one on base, the pitcher throws an illegal pitch. The batter hits to the outfield and successfully gains second base. However, the batter-runner missed first base and the defense makes a live ball appeal to get the third out. Does the offense have an option to take the result of the play or return the batter to the batter's box from the illegal pitch because the batter-runner never successfully attained first base or is the option negated because the batter-runner successfully attained second base (and the option is canceled once they reach first base)?

RULING: The runner is considered to have possession of the base once they pass it so the option for an illegal pitch is no longer given and the runner is declared out when the defense properly appeals they missed first base.

(Rule 10.8)

A.R. 10-13. With no outs and a 3-0 count on the batter, the lone base runner at second base attempts a steal of third base. The pitcher delivers an illegal pitch. What option, if any, does the offense have in each of the following cases?

- (1) The base runner is safe at third and the pitch is a strike.
- (2) The base runner is safe at third and the pitch is a ball.

- (3) The base runner is out at third and the pitch is a strike.
- (4) The base runner is out at third and the pitch is a ball.

RULING:

(1) Even though the base runner advanced one base, the batter did not reach first base safely. The ball remains live until the completion of the play, at which time a dead ball is called. The offensive coach may choose the result of the play (runner at third, 3-1 count to the batter) or the standard effect for an illegal pitch (ball awarded to the batter and the base runner(s) returns to the base(s) occupied at the time of the pitch). In this case, the effect would result in ball four to the batter, but since the runner at second was not forced to advance, they are returned to second, and there will be no outs, runners at first and second with a new batter due up.

(2) The pitch was called a ball and the batter is awarded first base on the walk, and since the only base runner advanced at least one base, the play stands and the illegal pitch is canceled. The ball remains live and runners may advance farther with liability to be put out.

(3) The ball is dead at the time of the put out at third. Since the batter did not reach first base safely, and the base runner did not advance at least one base, the offensive coach has the option of the result of the play (one out, no runners on, 3-1 count to the batter) or the more obvious choice of the standard effect for an illegal pitch. A ball is awarded to the batter and the base runner is put back on second, since they were not forced to advance on ball four. There will be no outs, runners at first and second with a new batter due up.

(4) The pitch was called a ball and the batter is awarded first base on the walk. The ball will remain live until the batter-runner stops at a base with the ball in the pitcher's possession in the circle. Because the base runner did not advance at least one base, the offensive coach will be given an option when the ball is dead. One choice will be the result of the play, which will be one out from the caught stealing at third and wherever the batter-runner ends up. The second choice will be the standard effect for an illegal pitch. Ball four is awarded to the batter for the illegal pitch, they are awarded first base only and the base runner is put back on second, since they were not forced to advance on the walk. There will be no outs, runners at first and second with a new batter due up.

(Rule 10.8)

A.R. 10-14. With no outs, a single base runner at second base, and a 1-0 count on the batter, the pitcher delivers an illegal pitch. The batter hits a long fly ball to the outfield, which is caught, and the runner legally tags and advances safely to third base. What option, if any, does the offense have?

RULING: Even though the base runner advanced one base, the batter did not reach first base safely. The ball remains live until the completion of the play, at which time a dead ball is called. The offensive coach may choose the result of the play (runner at third, one

out, new batter due up) or the standard effect for an illegal pitch (ball awarded to the batter and the base runner(s) returns to the base(s) occupied at the time of the pitch). In the case of the effect for an illegal pitch, the result would be no outs, runner at second, and a 2-0 count on the batter.

(Rule 10.8)

A.R. 10-15. With no outs and a 3-0 count on the batter, the pitcher delivers an illegal pitch and the ball is hit into play. With the runner configurations and results listed, what option, if any, does the offense have in each of the following cases?

- (1) A single base runner at first, forced out at second, and the batter-runner is safe at first.
- (2) A single base runner at second, tagged out at third, and the batter-runner is safe at first.
- (3) A single base runner at second, tagged out at third, and the batter-runner scores on an overthrow which goes deep into the right field corner.
- (4) A single base runner at second who remains there and the batter-runner is safe at first.
- (5) A single base runner at second who advances safely to third, but the batter-runner is out at first.

RULING: In (1) and (2) although the batter reached first base safely, the base runner did not advance at least one base. The ball remains live until the completion of the play, at which time a dead ball is called. The offensive coach may choose the result of the play (one out, runner at first, new batter) or the standard effect for an illegal pitch, which is that a ball is awarded to the batter and the base runner(s) returns to the base(s) occupied at the time of the pitch. In this case, the effect would result in ball four to the batter. In (1) the base runner is forced to advance, but in (2) they are not forced. Therefore, the effect for the illegal pitch in both cases will result in no outs, runners at first and second with a new batter due up.

In (3) the ball remains live until the completion of the play. The batter reached first base safely, and then went on to score, but the base runner did not advance at least one base. When the batter-runner scores, a dead ball is called. The offensive coach may choose the result of the play (one out, one run, no runners, new batter) or the standard effect for an illegal pitch, which is that a ball is awarded to the batter and the base runner(s) returns to the base(s) occupied at the time of the pitch. Ball four is awarded to the batter and the base runner is put back on second, since they were not forced to advance. There will be no outs, runners at first and second with a new batter due up.

In (4) the ball remains live until the completion of the play. The batter reached first base safely but the base runner did not advance at least one base. At the completion of the play a dead ball is called. The offensive coach may choose the result of the play or the standard effect for an illegal pitch, which in this case will have the same effect.

Ball four is awarded to the batter and the base runner remains at second, since they were not forced to advance. There will be no outs, runners at first and second with a new batter due up.

In (5) the ball remains live until the completion of the play. The base runner did advance at least one base but the batter did not reach first base safely. At the completion of the play a dead ball is called. The offensive coach may choose the result of the play (one out, runner at third, new batter) or the standard effect for an illegal pitch. Ball four is awarded to the batter but the base runner is returned to second, since they were not forced to advance. There will be no outs, runners at first and second with a new batter due up.

(Rule 10.8)

NO PITCH

A.R. 10-16. There are runners on first and second bases with no outs. The batter is a slapper who runs out of the front of the batter's box where they are hit by an illegal pitch that would not have entered the strike zone. What is the result if:

- (1) they swing and miss?
- (2) they do not swing?

RULING: In both (1) and (2), the ball is dead and the offensive coach will have an option. One option will be the standard effect for an illegal pitch (ball on the batter).

(1) The other option is to accept the result of the play (dead-ball strike).

(2) The other option is the result of being hit by a pitch before it gets to the front line of the batter's box ("no pitch").

(Rules 10.10.5 and 10.8)

SUBSTANCE ON THE BALL/ITEMS ON PITCHER

A.R. 10-17. Which substances may be applied to the ball or the pitcher's hand and which of those require the pitcher to wipe the substance off before gripping the ball? Also, in cold weather, may a pitcher blow their own breath onto their hand without then wiping their hand prior to gripping the ball?

RULING: In the pregame process, dirt can be used or substances like Gorilla Gold (original All Sport formula; not Gorilla Gold Golf Grip Enhancer) or Turface that remove the manufacturers' gloss and slickness on the ball. But once the umpire puts a ball in play, applying any substance to the ball is not legal unless done by or at the direction of the umpire.

Regarding the pitcher's hand, substances that do not transfer to the ball (e.g., Gorilla Gold (original All Sport formula; not Gorilla Gold Golf Grip Enhancer), mighty grip, cold air, etc.) do not have to be wiped off. However, all substances that do transfer to the ball, including dirt and saliva, must be wiped off before the pitcher grips the ball. Regardless of what product is used, umpires still have the

discretion to not allow the pitcher to use any product that transfers a tackiness to the ball.

(Rule 10.13)

A.R. 10-18. How may a pitcher wipe their pitching hand to remove a substance (e.g., resin, dirt, saliva)?

RULING: Although it is common for most pitchers to wipe their pitching hand on their uniform pants to remove a substance, they are not restricted only to using their pants to wipe the residue off. They can wipe on another part of their uniform or body, including a rag hanging in their belt behind them, or even their signal arm band if they choose. This must be a wiping motion with definitive contact with whatever uniform part is used.

(Rule 10.13.1)

A.R. 10-19. Regarding spray and liquid products designed to improve the pitcher's grip on the ball, how is an umpire to detect these products which are kept in the dugout and applied to the player's hands out of the view of the umpire?

RULING: If the pitcher puts any substance on their hand in the dugout, it will likely not be detected by either the umpires or opponents unless the substance transfers to the ball. In that case, when the ball becomes tacky, an illegal pitch is called for the first offense and the pitcher is ejected for any subsequent offense. It does not matter who on the defense defaces the ball, so regardless of the source, it is the pitcher who is ejected.

(Rule 10.13.2)

A.R. 10-20. Can a pitcher use rock rosin as long as they wipe it off before gripping the ball to pitch?

RULING: The rule allows the pitcher to use any resin as long as they wipe it off and it does not transfer to the ball. However, using rock rosin is only a theoretical possibility because the chemists claim their product will ALWAYS leave residue, which is why it is so popular, although messy. The rules do not exclude any particular product by name, but because rock rosin always transfers residue to the ball, it will not meet the rule.

(Rule 10.13.2)

RETURNING A PITCHED BALL TO THE PITCHER

A.R. 10-21. Runners on second and third bases, no outs, tie ball game, bottom of the seventh inning. The defensive coach uses a conference. The first pitch to the next batter is called a ball, the catcher throws the ball directly to first base, instead of back to the pitcher. An additional ball is awarded to the batter for violating Rule 10.16, and play is resumed with a 2-0 count. The batter receives two more balls and it is now apparent the intent was to walk the batter in as few pitches as possible. In hindsight, is there anything that should have been done differently?

RULING: Even with the violation immediately following the defensive conference, it is not realistic to anticipate the catcher would make this throw in order to avoid having to throw one of the four pitches needed for the walk. But in addition to the ball on the batter, the catcher would be warned and should they do it again, they would be ejected so it likely would not happen more than once a game. If the umpire has reason to believe the act was intentional in order to walk the batter, the ball need not be assessed, but the catcher would still be warned.

(Rule 10.16)

A.R. 10-22. With no runners on base, the batter nicks the pitch resulting in a foul ball. The catcher picks up the ball and throws it to the third baseplayer who is standing in the circle with the pitcher. Since the catcher did not return the ball directly to the pitcher, is a ball assessed?

RULING: There is no penalty for a catcher who does not return the ball directly to the pitcher if the ball was contacted by the batter.

(Rule 10.16)

TIME ALLOWED BETWEEN PITCHES

A.R. 10-23. The pitcher, catcher and batter all assume their respective positions in preparation for play. For no apparent reason, the pitcher steps backward off the pitcher's plate.

RULING: Since the umpire did not grant time, the umpire should continue the 20-second count and award a ball to the batter if the 20 seconds expires.

(Rule 10.18)

A.R. 10-24. The pitcher, catcher and batter all assume their respective positions in preparation for play. For no apparent reason, the batter leaves the batter's box.

RULING: Since the umpire did not grant time, the umpire should continue the 20-second count and award a strike to the batter if the count expires.

(Rule 10.18)

A.R. 10-25. The pitcher is not positioned on the pitcher's plate within 10 seconds of receiving the ball from the catcher or the umpired signaling "play ball".

RULING: This is not a violation of the 20 seconds between pitches. The pitcher does not need to be on the pitcher's plate within 10 seconds. This only applies to the batter and the catcher who must be in their respective boxes within 12 seconds. The only requirement is that the pitcher separate their hands to begin the pitch within 20 seconds.

(Rule 10.18)

A.R. 10-26. The pitcher, catcher and batter all assume their respective positions in preparation for play. For no apparent reason, one of the three aborts their position and their opponent reacts by aborting their position.

RULING: Even though the umpire did not originally grant time, the umpire should call "No Pitch" and direct all three to take their respective position and then restart the count.

(Rule 10.18)

A.R. 10-27. At the start of the game, the home team finishes its warm-up and is huddling in the circle, the pitcher has the ball and the batter is near the batter's box. Should the umpire call "Play ball" and start the 20-second count or should they wait until the huddle breaks up?

RULING: The plate umpire should manage the flow of the game by allowing the huddle to break up but if this is taking an excessive amount of time, walking toward the circle and encouraging the players to assume their positions is appropriate as is enlisting the help of the head coach in getting the defense ready to play in a timely manner. If the umpire's encouragement continues without a change in player behavior, it might be necessary to say "Play ball" and begin the count, or issue a player-to-player conference, but that will likely not be needed often.

(Rule 10.18)

A.R. 10-28. Can the batter assume their batting stance, step out of the batter's box without being granted time, step back into the box and legally hit the pitch?

RULING: Yes, because play was not suspended by the plate umpire, if the batter realizes their mistake of backing out of the box without time being called, they may get back in the box and continue their turn at bat.

(Rule 10.18)

WARM-UP PITCHES ALLOWED

A.R. 10-29. With a runner on third base, the defensive coach reports a defensive change between the pitcher and second baseplayer. The incoming pitcher takes their five allowable warm-up pitches and then throws four additional warm-up pitches, the penalty for which the umpire awards four balls to the next batter. As soon as the batter reaches first base on the award, the defensive coach switches the players back to their starting positions. The coach was simply walking the batter with no risk of the runner from third base advancing. Is this strategy legal?

RULING: It is legal, however, this is largely preventable by the umpires interceding immediately. Ideally, as soon as the fifth warm-up pitch is thrown, the plate umpire will prevent another warm-up pitch from being thrown by bringing the batter to the batter's box. If the plate umpire is still engaged in the administration of the substitution, the base umpire can stop the additional warm-up pitches which in the worst case, would be one additional warm-up pitch before an umpire intercedes. Teams attempting this tactic will likely throw the warm-up pitches quickly and the crew must be alert to the possibility that they are attempting to intentionally walk a batter using this strategy. A variation of this situation occurs when a pitcher begins an inning,

is replaced by a relief pitcher and then returns to pitch all in the same inning. The returning pitcher may quickly attempt four warm-up pitches and since they are not entitled to them, the same result of the next batter being awarded first base occurs. In the end though, by rule, if any pitcher throws warm-up pitches that they are not entitled to, the next batter(s) would receive the awarded ball(s).

(Rule 10.19)

A.R. 10-30. The starting pitcher is struggling with their accuracy so the head coach reports a substitution and brings in a player from the bullpen. As the substitute comes onto the field, the pitcher "dart throws" the ball to them and heads to the dugout. The incoming pitcher is hit right between the eyes and is injured to the point that they cannot enter the game. The original pitcher is re-entered. The issue is Rule 10.19.4 does not allow the pitcher who re-enters in the same inning to throw any warm-up pitches unless media goes to break per Rule 10.19.3.4. Rule 10.19.3.2 says the relief pitcher who comes in for an injured pitcher must be allowed adequate time to warm-up. Are they entitled to warm-up pitches in the inning?

RULING: If the injured pitcher is capable of leaving the field immediately, the re-entering pitcher should not be granted additional warm-up pitches since they have just come out of the game and they were not removed due to injury. If, however, there is significant delay in attending to the injured pitcher, then the re-entering pitcher should be granted warm-up time. During the delay, they can be granted time to warm-up, provided the medical personnel are at a safe location or they throw in a direction other than home plate that is safe for the medical staff and the injured pitcher. The key is using good judgment considering the safe return of the re-entering pitcher at the same time not providing them with an advantage they are not normally entitled to.

(Rules 10.19.3.1 and 10.19.3.4)

A.R. 10-31. A pitcher is struggling with their accuracy and is eventually removed from the pitching position due to injury. Their replacement has not warmed up at all and is granted more than five warm-up pitches to get ready. May the original pitcher come back to pitch in this game? Wouldn't coaches take advantage of this loophole in the warm-up rule when their pitcher is struggling?

RULING: NCAA rules allow a substitute pitcher adequate warm-up time in the event of an injury to the pitcher and do not prevent the pitcher who is removed due to injury from returning to pitch. If the replaced pitcher is ready to return, they can do so - even in the same inning - with no limitations other than not receiving warm-up pitches in the inning in which they were replaced. In the interest of student-athlete welfare and safety, the incoming pitcher should be allowed adequate warm-up opportunity even in the despicable circumstance of a coach instructing a student-athlete to fake an injury in order to get extra warm-up pitches for their replacement.

(Rules 10.19.3.2, 8.5.2 and 8.5.3)

A.R. 10-32. The pitcher shall be given adequate time to warm-up after any substantial delay caused by inclement weather, injury or delayed play by the umpire. So can they continue to throw warm-up pitches while the umpire is administering substitutions?

RULING: The key here is additional warm-up pitches are allowed in the event of "substantial delay". The purpose of the rule is to minimize the risk of injury to the pitcher who is unable to stay loose due to circumstances beyond their control. In general, recording lineup changes would not cause substantial delays and result in extra pitches. However, in extremely cold conditions or with complicated substitutions, the umpire may grant the additional warm-ups. In any case, the pitcher should ask the umpire for permission to throw additional warm-up pitches to be sure they will not be penalized or they may throw underhand to a teammate (other than to home plate) to stay loose while the substitutions are being completed without permission of the plate umpire.

(Rule 10.19.3.3)

RULE 11

Batting

LEGAL POSITION IN THE BATTER'S BOX

A.R. 11-1. The batter has a 2-1 count and on a called strike, they mistakenly think they have struck out so they begin to retreat to the dugout. The umpire signals the 2-2 count, but the batter continues to leave the plate area. Since the time between pitch clock is running, should the umpire wait until the 12 seconds allowed for them to return to the batter's box has elapsed (in which case they are out on strike three) or should the umpire suspend play to stop the 12 second countdown and call the batter back to the batter's box?

RULING: By tradition, the batter should be returned to the batter's box to complete their turn at bat. Regulation of time between pitches was intended to assist with pace of the game, not as a desired effect for a batter who mistakenly thinks they have struck out. It is a bit ironic because in all other situations, the players are expected to know the playing situation, but both baseball and softball codes allow for the batter to be called back to the batter's box if they lose track of the count with no ill effect.

(Rule 11.2.1)

FAIR BALL

A.R. 11-2. With one out and the bases loaded, the batter hits a declared infield fly. No fielder makes an attempt to catch the ball, which eventually falls to the ground in the path of the batter-runner who is running to first base.

- (1) The ball hits the batter-runner's foot as they are running in foul territory to first base;
- (2) The ball deflects off the batter-runner's foot as they are running in fair territory and goes directly to the catcher who picks up the ball and throws out the runner at third base who is standing off the base in awe. Is this a double play due to the infield fly and the tag out?

RULING: On the declared infield fly, the batter is out if the ball is fair.

(1) The ball becomes a foul ball at the moment it contacts the batter-runner in foul territory. The batter returns to the batter's box with an additional strike and with the bases loaded because infield fly does not apply to foul balls.

(2) The batter is out on the declared infield fly and the ball becomes dead at the moment it deflects off them in fair territory. Applying the

rule for interference by a retired player, the runner closest to home is the third out.

(Rules 11.4, 11.5, 11.16 and 12.18.3.1)

FOUL TIP

A.R. 11-3 With two strikes and no one on base, the pitcher pitches the ball which and skips off the dirt just as the batter is swinging. The batter gets a piece of it off the bounce fouling it directly back thus producing a foul tip into the catcher's glove. Did the fact that they were able to foul tip it eliminate the dropped third strike or is any pitch that hits the dirt considered a dropped third strike?

RULING: The batter may bunt or hit a pitch even though it has bounced, but then must take the result of the play as opposed to the result of the dropped third strike. So, if they contact a pitch on a high bounce and hit it out of the park, they are credited with a home run. If they foul tip a low bounce back to the catcher, the result is a strike and, in this particular case, since it was their third strike, they are out. A batted ball cannot result in a dropped third strike.

(Rules 11.6 and 11.11)

A.R. 11-4. The runner on first base leaves on the pitch when the batter foul tips a third strike. The pitch pops out of the catcher's glove and is caught with their open hand. The plate umpire, who is blocked out from the bare-hand catch, immediately calls a foul ball which leads the base umpire to instruct the runner to return to first base. The defensive coach comes out and asks the plate umpire to go for help which he does and finds out the base umpire clearly saw the play as a foul tip, not foul ball. The plate umpire then reverses the call to foul tip thus resulting in the batter being declared out and allows the runner to advance to second base since the catcher made no play. Is this correction allowed?

RULING: No. Once the ball was declared dead (foul ball) AND because this was not a situation where the foul ball could be changed to a dead ball award, the result should have been foul ball and the base runner returned to their base occupied at the time of the pitch. (See also Rule 6.9.2.) Also note the result is not protestable as Rule 7.2.2.1 specifically clarifies whether a ball is fair or foul is not eligible for protest.

(Rules 11.6 and 11.5.2)

A.R. 11-5. On a potential foul tip with two strikes on the batter:

- (1) the ball goes directly off the bat, nicks off the catcher's glove, off their mask, rebounds into the air, and the catcher dives to catch it in their glove;
- (2) the ball goes directly off the bat, nicks off the catcher's glove, hits them in the chest, rebounds up into the air where they can run under it and they catch it in their glove;
- (3) the ball goes directly off the bat, hits the catcher in the chest, rebounds upward where they are able catch it in their glove without taking a step;

- (4) the ball goes directly off the bat, nicks the catcher's glove which pops it up off the umpire's mask then it is eventually caught by the catcher.

RULING: (1) and (2) would be a foul tip; strike three. (3) and (4) would be foul ball because in (3) the first contact was not with the catcher's hand or glove and in (4) the catcher was assisted by the umpire in completing the catch.

(Rule 11.6.1)

A.R. 11-6. A ball travels directly from the bat, in a straight line, to the glove or bare hand and is deflected straight up into the air.

RULING: If the catcher then legally catches the ball, it is a foul tip. If it is not caught unassisted by the catcher or is touched by or caught by someone else, it is a foul ball.

(Rule 11.6.1)

BATTING OUT OF ORDER

A.R. 11-7. The ninth batter is due to lead off the inning, but the lead-off batter steps to the plate and hits a slow roller in the infield. In an effort to beat the ground ball out, the batter-runner lunges for first base. As soon as they are declared safe, the batter-runner falls to the ground with a hamstring injury. As the medical staff tends to the injured player, their head coach realizes they have batted out of order. The head coach sends the ninth batter (who should have batted) to run at first base and reports a new batter for the injured player in the leadoff spot.

RULING: The umpire should inform the head coach that the batting order cannot be corrected now that the batter completed their turn at bat, so only the reported substitute may go to first base and the next batter will be the player in the second spot in the batting order. The defense still maintains its ability to appeal batting out of order if they so choose.

(Rules 11.9.2 and 11.9.3)

A.R. 11-8. To start the game, the leadoff batter doubles, but instead of the second batter following them, the third batter steps into the batter's box. Batter three (improper batter) singles to the outfield and is safe at second base on the throw home. The runner who started on second base advances to home but misses third base. At the conclusion of the play, the first base coach appeals to the plate umpire regarding batting out of order at the same time the third base coach appeals to the base umpire regarding the missed base. Which takes precedence?

RULING: The umpire crew will resolve the appeals in the order in which they were appealed. If an order cannot be determined (i.e., too close to call), the plate umpire will ask the head coach to identify the appeal to be ruled on first. If the defense first appeals the base runner from second base missed third base, they are out (first out) and then appeals the improper batter before the next pitch, batter two is declared out for failing to bat (second out) and the at bat by batter three is nullified. Batter three is the batter who follows the

batter declared out, so they're now up to bat with 2 outs and no base runners. If the defense first appeals the improper batter before the next pitch, batter two is declared out (first out) for failing to bat and since all advances are nullified, the base runner is returned to second base. Because the runner is now on second base, there is no appeal that they missed third base. The next batter is the one who follows the player called out (that is, batter two), so batter three now bats with one out and a runner on second base.

(Rule 11.9.3)

A.R. 11-9. The leadoff batter in the inning strikes out, the next batter is skipped in the batting order, but the player after them grounds into the second out of the inning. Before a pitch to the next batter, the defensive coach informs the umpire that a batter was skipped and in the effect of Rule 11.9.3, "the player who should have batted is out". Therefore, the inning is over with three outs, correct?

RULING: Incorrect. The batter who should have batted is out, but the result of the play (the ground out) would be nullified. A coach who sees this mistake needs to decide who they want at bat. If batting out of order is brought to the umpire's attention, the skipped batter is declared out and the correct batter entering the batter's box is the one who just grounded out. If the batter who grounded out is the preferred out, the next batter is the one who follows them in the batting order and the mistake in the batting order is not brought to the umpire's attention at this time. In any case, there will be a batter with two outs.

(Rule 11.9.3)

A.R. 11-10. Bases loaded with one out and the number three hitter, who is having a bad day at the plate, due up. The coach sends the clean-up hitter to bat out-of-order. If the defense does not catch the batting out of order, the offense gains an advantage by batting the number four hitter, rather than the struggling three hitter, with the bases loaded. If the defense catches the batting out of order violation, the hitter who should have batted is called out (the struggling number three hitter) and the number four hitter gets to bat again. Should the umpire allow the clean-up hitter to bat again if this strategy is used?

RULING: While this might seem like an unfair advantage, giving up an out by not having the number three hitter bat makes little sense. However, if a coach does use this strategy, the rules book effect must be enforced, so indeed the clean-up hitter would bat again, but with two outs and the bases loaded.

(Rule 11.9.3)

CHECKED SWING

A.R. 11-11. With two outs, a runner on first base, and a 0-2 count on the ninth batter in the batting order, the runner attempts to steal on the next pitch. The batter attempts to check their swing and the runner is tagged out before reaching second base. The defensive coach immediately yells to the umpire to

ask the base umpire for a ruling on the checked swing, but the catcher tells the plate umpire not to request help.

RULING: Rule 11.10.4 requires the umpire to request help when asked by the defense. The decision on whether or not the batter swung and is the third out of the inning (meaning the next inning starts with the leadoff batter in the batter's box) or the base runner was the third out of the inning (meaning the ninth batter begins the next inning in the batter's box) might be significant and should not be ruled on by the plate umpire until it is clear whether or not the defensive team does want the help of the base umpire. Therefore, the catcher and coach should be allowed to quickly confer before confirming whether or not they are questioning the checked swing. In either case, the plate umpire must inform the scorer which player was the final out of the inning.

(Rule 11.10.4)

A.R. 11-12. With two outs and two strikes on the batter, the runner on first base is thrown out attempting to steal second base. The defense properly appeals the checked swing so the batter is declared out on strikes.

RULING: The batter becomes the third out for both scoring purposes and establishing the next batter.

(Rule 11.10.5)

DROPPED THIRD-STRIKE RULE

A.R. 11-13. With a runner on first base and one out, the batter strikes out swinging, but the catcher drops the pitch. The plate umpire calls the batter out. Seeing the dropped pitch, the batter runs to first base, while the runner from first base runs to second base.

- (1) The catcher looks to second base, double pumps and then throws to first base just after the retired batter steps on the base. At the end of the play, the defensive coach argues for batter interference on the already retired batter (Rule 11.20.3), so the runner, now on second base, should be declared out.
- (2) The same situation applies except that the catcher deliberately throws the ball at the retired batter's back as they run to first base.

RULING: In both (1) and (2), the batter is out on strike three and the ball is live allowing the runner to advance at their own risk. The defense is responsible for knowing the rule and should concentrate on the runner who is advancing rather than the batter who was already declared out.

(1) There is no relief because the catcher chose to throw to the wrong base.

(2) The catcher who makes this throw risks that the live ball will ricochet somewhere allowing the base runner to advance farther as well as risking being ejected for unsporting behavior if the umpire believes the catcher deliberately threw at an opponent.

(Rules 11.11 and 11.20.3)

A.R. 11-14. With less than two outs and first base occupied, the batter leaves the batter's box and heads toward first base after a third strike not held by the catcher. The runner feigns stealing second base, but returns to first base, which draws a pick-off throw by the catcher. The throw ricochets off the retired batter allowing the runner to advance to second base before the ball can be retrieved.

RULING: Rule 11.11 covers the general rule for dropped third strike, but does not apply here since there are less than two outs and first base is occupied. Therefore, the batter is not entitled to run and since they are already out on strikes when they interfere with a defensive player's opportunity to make a play, apply the penalty in Rule 11.20.3 - Delayed dead ball. The defense may choose the result of the play, or will more likely choose option of the batter and the base runner closest to home at the time of the interference (in this case the runner on first base) both being declared out.

(Rules 11.11 and 11.20.3)

A.R. 11-15. With runners on first and second bases and two outs, the left-handed batter swings and misses a dropped third strike. Rather than make a play on the batter-runner, the catcher scoops up the ball in the right handed batter's box and throws to third base. The third baseplayer receives the throw while in contact with the base, but does not tag the lead runner. Is the runner out?

RULING: The runner is out on the force play.

(Rule 11.11.1)

HITTING BALL A SECOND TIME

A.R. 11-16. A slapper hits the pitch and drops their bat to run to first base. As the ball is bouncing up and the bat is falling down (out of the batter's hands), they make contact in the air (1) over fair territory or (2) over foul territory.

RULING: Since the bat was not on the ground, it is assumed to have hit the ball. Therefore, in (1) the ball is dead, the batter is out and any runners would return to their bases at the time of the pitch. In (2) it is a foul ball provided the batter did not intentionally hit the ball with the bat. If the umpire were to judge that the batter intentionally made the bat hit the ball, they would be out regardless of the ball being fair or foul.

(Rules 11.12.1 and 11.12.2)

A.R. 11-17. The batter swings and misses the pitch; however, on their follow through, the pitch contacts the bat and rolls into fair territory.

RULING: The ruling depends on whether the contact was intentional or unintentional. If contact is unintentional, it is a delayed dead-ball and the head coach of the defensive team may choose either the result of the play or it is a dead-ball strike and all base runners must return to the base legally occupied at the time of the pitch. If contact is intentional, the ball is dead, the batter is declared out, and all base runners must return to the base legally occupied at the time of the pitch.

(Rules 11.12.3, 11.12.4 and 11.20.4 Note)

HIT BATTER (BY PITCH)

A.R. 11-18. The batter is hit by a pitch that was also ball four. Is the batter awarded first base on a walk or hit by pitch?

RULING: In most cases, it is scored as being hit by a pitch. The rationale is that the ball should be dead and other base runners not permitted to advance as the catcher tracks down the deflected pitch. Had it been scored a walk, the ball would be live. That said though, if the batter makes no attempt to avoid being hit by the pitch (which was not entirely in the batter's box) or initiates the contact with the pitch and the umpire would not have awarded the batter first base based on the contact, the batter is awarded first base on ball four and it is scored as a base on balls. There are umpire mechanics specified for each of these awards to assist the scorekeeper in the proper call.

(Rules 11.13, 14.1.4 and 14.1.16)

A.R. 11-19. If a batter is hit by a pitch that:

- (1) is over the plate, but not in the strike zone, is the batter awarded first base?
- (2) does not reach the plate but would have been a strike had it not hit the batter a strike?

RULING: The result depends upon the situation. (1) If the batter-ball contact is out of the strike zone, but the batter swings, it is a dead-ball strike. If the batter-ball contact is over the plate, but not a strike, it is a dead ball and the batter is either awarded first base or a ball; in the latter case because the batter made no attempt to avoid being hit. (2) The ball is dead and the pitch is a strike.

(Rules 11.13 and 11.13.3.2)

BATTED BALL OFF BATTER, ATTACHED EQUIPMENT, CLOTHING

A.R. 11-20. The batter swings at a pitch which then goes directly from their bat to the toe of their front foot which is entirely out of the box:

- (1) in the air; or
- (2) in contact with the ground.

In both cases, their back foot is completely within the lines of the batter's box.

RULING: (1) Because the batter's only contact with the ground is their back foot, which is within the batter's box, it is a foul ball, strike. (See also Rule 11.5.1.1.)

(2) With both batter's feet in contact with the ground and one being outside the batter's box, the batter is considered out of the box. The ball is dead, the batter is out regardless of if the ball becomes fair or foul.

(Rule 11.14)

ILLEGALLY BATTED BALL

A.R. 11-21. The batter attempts to avoid being hit by an inside pitch. In doing so, they lean forward, stepping (1) on the plate or (2) on the ground out of the batter's box with part of their foot to catch their balance. The bat is still on their shoulder but the barrel, which is behind their head, contacts the pitch that then rolls into fair territory.

RULING: In (1) and (2), delayed dead ball is signaled. The coach of the defensive team may choose either the result of the play or the standard effect for this illegal contact which is a strike on the batter and all base runners return to the bases occupied at the time of the pitch. The batter need not show intent to contact the pitch when contact is made.

(Rules 11.15.1 and 11.21.4)

A.R. 11-22. On a pitch, the runner leaves early from first base as the pitcher delivers an illegal pitch. The runner advances to second as the batter grounds out to first. At the moment of bat-ball contact, the batter's foot was on the ground outside the batter's box.

RULING: There are three violations in this play, all resulting in a delayed dead ball. At the conclusion of the play, the offense and defense will each be presented with an option. Any time the offense and defense have options on the same play the protocol is to ask the offense before the defense.

(1) The offensive head coach will be asked if they wish to take the result of the play (batter out and runner advances) OR the effect for the illegal pitch (runner returns to first and a ball is awarded to the batter).

(2) The defensive head coach will then be asked if they wish to accept the offense's choice as the new result of the play OR if they wish to take the effect for leaving early ("no pitch", which negates the illegally batted ball, the runner is out, and the batter is returned to the batter's box with the count they had before that pitch) OR the effect for the illegally batted ball (runner is returned to first, and a strike is called on the batter). The defense's choice becomes the final outcome of the play. If we have multiple violations with different effects, the offended coach must select the effect they want applied.

(Rules 11.15.1, 10.8 and 12.15)

INFIELD FLY RULE

A.R. 11-23. Is the infield fly rule in effect even if no umpire calls it?

RULING: If a ball is hit that would otherwise meet the definition of an infield fly, but is not declared, it is not an infield fly in NCAA play.

(Rule 11.16)

A.R. 11-24. With no outs and the bases loaded, the batter hits a declared infield fly, however, the third baseplayer loses sight of the ball in the sun. The ball lands in foul territory and without being touched, rolls into fair territory right in front of home plate. The third baseplayer picks up the ball and throws

to first base to tag out the base runner who started there but was standing off the base.

RULING: Double play. The batter is out on the fair infield fly and the base runner from first base is out on the tag.

(Rule 11.16)

A.R. 11-25. With one out and the bases loaded, the batter hits an infield fly straight up in the air which is not caught. The ball lands just behind home plate and rolls forward into fair territory without being touched. The catcher, seeing the base runner from third attempt to score as the ball was rolling on the ground, grabs the ball in front of home plate and tags the base runner before they touch home. Is this a double play due to the infield fly and the tag out?

RULING: Yes, the batter is out on the infield fly and the base runner on third base who attempted to advance was legally tagged out.

(Rule 11.16)

A.R. 11-26. Is it an infield fly situation?

- (1) If an outfielder is positioned just beyond the infield dirt at the time of the pitch and calls off the infielder who could easily catch a pop fly ball?
- (2) If an infielder has time to run out to the outfield and is in position to easily catch a pop fly ball, does that change it from an infield fly to just a routine fly ball and a routine fly ball to an infield fly respectively?

RULING: Both (1) and (2) remain an infield fly as long as an infielder could catch the ball with ordinary effort regardless of who actually catches the fly ball.

(Rule 11.16 Notes 1, 2 and 3)

INTERFERENCE BY BATTER

A.R. 11-27. Bases are loaded and the count is 2-2 on the batter. The next pitch is ball three; however, the batter drops their bat and runs to first base. All base runners advance without anyone attempting to play on them, and a run scores. The umpires, realizing that it is only ball three, bring the batter back to the batter's box and return the runners back to their original bases. Is this the correct ruling?

RULING: The umpires are correct in recalling the batter to the box and continuing their turn at bat with a full count. However, the base runners who advanced should not have been returned to their original bases. They advanced legally during a live ball and should receive credit for doing so, including the run scored. The defense is responsible for knowing the situation and this is not interference by the batter. Returning the base runners to their previous bases would be protestable. Note: This play is different than if the umpire mistakenly awards the batter first base, thinking the last pitch was ball four, and the forced base runner advances or is put out at second base. In this latter case, the umpire put the players in jeopardy (either the defense not knowing they could put out the base runner or the base runner not avoiding being tagged out respectively), so both the batter and base runner are returned to their respective positions.

(Rules 11.20 and 7.3.5)

A.R. 11-28. There's a runner on second base and a right handed batter at the plate when the pitch is thrown inside, bounces in the dirt and is blocked by the catcher in the batter's box where the batter is standing. The batter steps out of the batter's box (towards the dugout) because the pitch and the catcher are at their feet. The catcher picks up the ball and attempts to throw out the runner advancing to third base. On their throw, the catcher contacts the batter (who is clearly out of the box), which causes the throw to be too late to throw out the runner. Is this interference?

RULING: Although it is unfortunate that the batter was trying to get out of the way of the catcher, they are still charged with interference on this play. Interference can be intentional or unintentional as it is in this case. Interference is ruled in this case on the batter.

(Rule 11.20.2)

A.R. 11-29. A batter draws their bat backward just prior to a pitch and contacts the catcher. Is this interference?

RULING: Often, the umpire's time management skills of holding the pitcher up until the batter has assumed their set position will prevent this situation. But assuming it did not, this is a judgment call with the overriding principle of penalizing the offender. If the pitcher has not begun their motion, as soon as contact is made with the catcher, the umpire should call "no pitch" and step out of the set position. Everyone then resets without penalty. If drawing the bat backward is an attempt to hinder the catcher (e.g., in showing bunt and then deliberately drawing the bat back to protect a base stealer), assess the penalty for interference (Rule 11.20.2). If the contact impedes the batter's attempt to contact the ball, enforce the effect for catcher obstruction (Rule 9.5.2).

(Rules 11.20.2, 9.5.2 and 9.5.2 Note 1)

A.R. 11-30. The runner on first base is stealing second base on a 3-1 count. On the pitch, the right handed batter believes it to be a ball and starts across home plate on a walk, however, the pitch is called a strike. The catcher starts to throw to catch the base runner stealing but stops as the batter-runner crosses in front of them. The catcher does not throw but can interference be called or is this similar to when a catcher does not throw to first base on a bunted ball when the batter-runner is potentially in the way of the throw?

RULING: These are two different plays with different results. In the first, the batter can be called out for interference since they are not entitled to be out of the batter's box and interfere with the catcher. In the second case, if there is no throw, you cannot determine if the batter-runner interfered with the catch at first base so it cannot be assumed interference would have occurred.

(Rules 11.20.2 and 12.18.1.5.2)

A.R. 11-31. With a runner on second base, the left-handed batter takes a strike. The catcher, attempting to pick off the runner, throws but the ball strikes the

motionless bat of the batter who is standing still in the batter's box and the ball deflects out of play into the dugout.

RULING: The batter has not hindered the catcher although the ball has deflected out of play. The base runner scores on the play (on the two base award) and the batter remains at bat with a strike one count.

(Rules 11.20.2 Note 2 and 12.13.8.3)

A.R. 11-32. There's a runner on third base with one out. The batter attempts contact, but misses the pitch, on a suicide squeeze play. The catcher drops the pitch and it rolls forward in front of home plate but within reach. The runner stops their advance, retreats and is about to re-touch third base as the batter makes contact with the catcher. Is the penalty for the batter interfering Rule 11.20.2 or Rule 11.20.2 EFFECT Exception (1)?

RULING: The ruling will depend on the context of the contact. Since the runner was about to re-occupy third base, they were no longer advancing so Exception (1) does not apply. The umpire could rule interference or not make any call since no play was being made if the contact was judged to be incidental.

(Rule 11.20.2 EFFECT and Exception (1))

A.R. 11-33. Are the following batter's interference?

- (1) Following a pitch, the batter, while still in the batter's box, bends down to tie their shoe. As they do, the catcher attempts to return the ball to the pitcher, but the ball hits the batter's helmet and caroms into foul territory allowing the runner on first base to successfully advance.
- (2) A batter's backswing contacts the catcher's glove, knocking the ball loose and as it rolls to the backstop, the runner on first base successfully advances.

RULING: Since no play was being made, (1) and (2) are considered accidental interference. The batter is not penalized by enforcing batter interference and neither is the defense as the base runner must return to first base. The result of the play is a ball or strike as called.

(Rules 11.20.2 EFFECT Exception (2) and 11.20.4 Note)

A.R. 11-34. With runners on first and third bases, the catcher attempts to pick off the runner on first base after a called third strike. The batter, although not entitled to run, runs to first base in fair territory and prevents the first baseplayer from catching the throw.

RULING: Delayed dead ball is signaled. The defense may choose the result of the play or the batter is out on strikes, the runner on third base is declared out and the runner from first base is returned there.

(Rule 11.20.3)

A.R. 11-35. With a runner on third base, the batter is declared out on strikes, but runs toward first base confusing the catcher who responds by throwing to the first baseplayer. The first baseplayer does not see the throw coming, so the ball sails into right field allowing the runner from third base to score. Is it the catcher's responsibility to know the batter is out or is this interference because the batter duped the catcher into making a throw?

RULING: It is the catcher's responsibility to know when the batter is out and when they might need to make a throw because of a dropped third strike. Running to first base after being called out on strikes would not be interference by the batter-runner unless they did something to interfere with play (e.g., providing a screen so the first baseplayer could not return a throw home to prevent the runner on third base from scoring).

(Rule 11.20.3)

A.R. 11-36. Runner on first base with one out. The batter misses strike three, as does the catcher, and the batter runs. The catcher double pumps as they consider throwing to second base to put out the advancing runner, but instead throw to first base. At the end of the play, the defensive coach wants the lead runner declared out as a result of Rule 11.20.3.

RULING: Although the retired batter may have confused the catcher, it is the catcher's responsibility to know the ball was live and the runner was able to advance at their own risk. In this case, they did not interfere with the catcher so the batter remains out on the strikeout and the runner remains at second base.

(Rule 11.20.3)

A.R. 11-37. With less than two outs and first base occupied, the batter leaves the batter's box and heads toward first base after a third strike not held by the catcher. The runner feigns stealing second base but returns to first base which draws a pick-off throw by the catcher. The throw ricochets off the retired batter allowing the runner to advance to second base.

RULING: The batter is not entitled to run because they are already out on strikes. Therefore, when they interfere with a defensive player's opportunity to make a play, it is a delayed dead ball. The defense may choose the result of the play or the runner closest to home at the time of the interference (in this case the runner on first base) shall be declared out.

(Rule 11.20.3)

A.R. 11-38. With a base runner on first base, the batter swings and misses. On their backswing, the bat accidentally contacts the catcher who is attempting to make a play on the base runner. The contact occurs (1) inside or (2) outside the batter's box.

RULING: In (1) and (2), the umpire signals delayed dead ball. The defensive team shall choose either the delayed dead-ball strike and the result of the play, or the dead-ball strike and each base runner must return to the base legally occupied at the time of the pitch.

(Rules 11.20.4 Note)

A.R. 11-39. Runner on second base with two outs. The catcher catches a swinging third strike, but the pitch is high and inside bringing them up and behind the batter. The batter's swing is balanced and normal (although long) which causes contact with the catcher, the mitt or the ball. What is the correct ruling?

RULING: The batter is entitled to one unobstructed swing, but only until the catcher contacts the pitch. If a batter's backswing accidentally hits the catcher or the ball, it is a delayed dead ball and the head coach of the defensive team may choose either the result of the play, or it is a dead ball strike and all base runners must return to the base occupied at the time of the pitch. In this play, the batter would be out on the third strike.

(Rules 11.20.4 Note)

RULE 12

Base Running

BASE RUNNER(S) MAY ADVANCE WITH LIABILITY TO BE PUT OUT

A.R. 12-1. With the bases loaded and no one out, a declared infield fly results in the batter being declared out, but no infielder attempts to play the batted ball which hits the ground and rolls into short center field. The runner on third base, having taken their lead off and seeing no one play the ball, advances home. The center fielder picks up the ball and throws it to third base. The defense appeals the lead runner's failure to tag up on the declared infield fly because the rules require runners to tag before advancing on fly balls.

RULING: The base runners are required to tag on caught fly balls, but need not tag up on an uncaught infield fly. They are in jeopardy of being put out if they attempt to advance.

(Rule 12.3.6 Note)

RUNNER IS OUT

A.R. 12-2. On a play at first base, the throw bounces and the first baseplayer securely controls the ball between their arm and their body just before the batter-runner touches the base. Is the batter-runner out?

RULING: By rule, the batter-runner is out on a force play if the fielder contacts the base while having and maintaining possession of the ball. However, possession is defined by a fielder who, with their hand(s) and/or glove/mitt gains control of a batted, pitched or thrown ball. Therefore, the batter-runner in the question should be called safe.

(Rules 12.4.2 and 12.10.2)

A.R. 12-3. Bottom of the seventh, tie game, two outs with runners on first and second bases. The batter hits a slow roller to the first baseplayer who fields the ball barehanded between their feet, then turns around and dives for first base. They reach to touch first base with the ball for the force out and immediately after the ball touches the base, it squirts loose. The runner from second base crosses home plate before the first baseplayer can regain possession of the ball. Does the run score or is the batter-runner out on the force out?

RULING: The batter-runner is out on the force play. Unlike for a tag play, there is no time frame that the ball must be held on the base for a force out. If the defensive player has control of the ball when it touches the base, the base later dislodging the ball is irrelevant. Similarly, if the first baseplayer fields a ground ball, has secure possession, and instead of diving to tag the ball to the base, they take a few steps parallel to the foul line and touch first base with their foot.

At the instant they step on the bag, the batter-runner's foot lands half on the bag and half on the first baseplayer's foot causing them both to get tangled up, fall and the ball to slip out. The play was nothing intentional; just a wreck immediately after contact with the base on the force out. The batter-runner would be out on the force even though they caused the ball to come loose.

(Rules 12.4.2 and 12.10.2)

A.R. 12-4. With one out and a runner on first base, the batter hits a deep fly ball to center field. The runner, thinking the ball will be caught, returns to first base to tag and consider advancing. Meanwhile, the batter-runner rounds first base, thus passing the runner and is therefore the second out of the inning. The center fielder loses the ball in the sun and does not make the catch, but picks the ball up and throws to second base to put out the advancing runner.

RULING: By virtue of the batter-runner's base running mistake, they are the second out of the inning, but the out also removes the force on the runner who precedes them. Therefore, unless the base runner is tagged out at second base, they would be safe and play would continue with two outs.

(Rule 12.4.3)

A.R. 12-5. With a runner on first base, the batter hits a deep fly to center field, which is in the center fielder's glove, but then ball falls out of glove over the home run fence. The runner is between second and third bases at time of the umpire's signal of a home run and the batter-runner is standing on second base. In the confusion, the third base coach thinks the ball has been caught and directs the runner to return to first base to tag. The runner retreats and touches second base while the batter-runner is still standing on it unsure if the ball was caught or not. As the base umpire continues to signal the home run, the runner and batter-runner are in reverse order so the batter-runner stays at second base, allowing the preceding runner to pass them going forward to retouch second base and then follows them the rest of the way to the plate. The defense appeals that the runners are out of order resulting in the plate umpire calling the batter-runner out for passing the runner. In reality though, the batter-runner did not pass their teammate, the preceding runner retreated to behind the batter-runner. Shouldn't the violator (the runner who started on first base) be the one called out?

RULING: While it is true the trailing runner did not pass the preceding runner, they are responsible for staying in the correct order as they run the bases. Therefore, the batter-runner would be out on the appeal for running the bases out of order.

(Rule 12.4.3)

A.R. 12-6. With fewer than two outs, a batter, while running the bases after a home run outside the playing field, passes a preceding runner.

RULING: The batter is out, but all preceding runners score. With two outs, only those preceding runners score who have touched the plate before the batter is declared out. This is a timing play, not an appeal play.

(Rule 12.4.3 Note 1)

A.R. 12-7. The play begins with runners on first and second bases and the batter hitting a towering fly ball. As both runners return to tag up, the trailing runner stumbles right before they retouch first base. The center fielder makes the catch, thus retiring the batter-runner who is right next to the trailing runner who has stumbled. The retired batter-runner assists the trailing runner in regaining their footing and safely returning to first base. Is the trailing runner out for being assisted by a batter-runner or is the runner closest to home out because a retired runner assisted an active runner?

RULING: The assisted runner would be out for receiving assistance from the retired batter-runner. By rule, only another runner who has not yet crossed home plate may assist a teammate so by virtue of being put out on the caught fly ball, the batter-runner is no longer an active base runner able to help the runner who stumbled.

(Rule 12.4.4)**BATTER-RUNNER IS OUT**

A.R. 12-8. The batter-runner, after tapping the ball down the first baseline, stops and makes the first baseplayer come forward to tag them on the foul line. If they twist their shoulders or duck down to avoid or delay a tag without taking a step backward, are they in violation of Rule 12.11.4?

RULING: The rules specifically prohibit stepping backward to avoid a tag, but as long as the batter-runner does not move their feet backward nor run out of the baseline to avoid the tag, they can delay a tag by other means such as ducking.

(Rules 12.5.7 and 12.11.4)

A.R. 12-9 With a runner on third base, the batter on a walk, dropped third strike or batted ball (1) rounds first and intentionally runs into right field or (2) runs through first base farther than the umpire judges they needed to given the speed with which they were running to first, in order to make it more difficult for the defense to make a play on them so the runner from third can score more easily.

RULING: In both (1) and (2), the ball is dead, the batter-runner is out, and the base runner must return to the third base.

(Rules 12.5.9 and 12.11.3)**DOUBLE FIRST BASE**

A.R. 12-10. On a ground ball to the infield, the first base player sets up with their foot entirely on the foul-colored portion of the double base while receiving the throw. The batter-runner properly runs to the foul portion and contact occurs.

RULING: Obstruction is called on the defense. The batter-runner is awarded first base. The foul portion of the double base is designated for the batter-runner during a force play. A fielder who occupies or blocks that portion causes obstruction.

(Rule 12.6)

A.R. 12-11 The batter-runner swings at strike three and the catcher drops it. The catcher fields the ball in foul territory and throws to first base. The first base player catches the throw while standing on the foul-colored portion of the base as the batter-runner arrives and touches the same portion.

RULING: Legal. No interference or obstruction. When the throw to first base originates from foul territory, both the batter-runner and the defensive player may use either portion of the double base.

(Rule 12.6)

A.R. 12-12 The batter hits a ball to deep right field. No play is being made at first base. The batter-runner touches the foul-colored portion while rounding first.

RULING: Legal. When no play is being made at first base, the batter-runner may touch either portion of the double first base.

(Rule 12.6)

A.R. 12-13 The batter-runner reaches first safely, overruns the base, and returns to stand only on the foul-colored portion while the pitcher has possession of the ball in the circle.

RULING: The batter-runner is out. After overrunning first base, the batter-runner must return to the fair portion of the base. Standing solely on the foul portion does not satisfy base occupancy requirements per Rule 12.6.

(Rule 12.6)

A.R. 12-14 The batter-runner hits a ground ball and reaches first base safely, touching the foul-colored portion of the double first base. They overrun first base and then immediately attempt to return to the fair (white) portion. The first base player, in possession of the ball, stands on the fair portion and blocks the batter-runner's direct access to the base.

RULING: Obstruction is called on the defense. The batter-runner is awarded first base. After overrunning first base, the batter-runner is required to return to the fair portion of the double base. When a defensive player not in the act of making a play blocks access to the base while in possession of the ball, obstruction shall be called. The defensive player can only be in this position if they believe the runner missed touching the bag or made an attempt to go to second base after overrunning first base.

(Rules 12.6, 9.5.4.6 and 9.5.4.8)

BASE RUNNER IS OUT AFTER A PROPER APPEAL

A.R. 12-15. After a conference with the bases loaded and no outs, the base runner from third base returns to their base, but the base runners from second and first bases switch places. The base runner from third base scores on a sacrifice fly (first out) and then the defense appeals switching bases at second and first bases.

RULING: Although the second and third outs are made on the appeal, they are timing plays so the run would score. Note: Both players and the head coach are also ejected.

(Rule 12.9.3)

TAG AND FORCE PLAYS

A.R. 12-16. During a rundown, the fielder, who is forcing the trapped runner to retreat, has secure possession of the ball and dives forward to tag the runner who is attempting to dive back into the trailing base. The fielder tags the runner's cleat with the gloved ball but the base runner's foot flips the ball out of the glove.

RULING: For a tag to be complete, the fielder must maintain secure possession of the ball unless the fielder drops the ball while making a secondary move. In this case, the tag is incomplete and the runner declared safe.

(Rule 12.10.1)

A.R. 12-17. Base runners on first and third bases with two outs. The batter punches the ball up the middle where the shortstop fields it, but their only play is at second base.

- (1) The runner slides to the outside of the base without touching it and as they try to reach back, the second baseplayer tags them out.
- (2) The runner slides over second base but their momentum takes them past the base. As they try to reach back, the second baseplayer tags them out. In both (1) and (2), the runner from third base crosses home plate before the tag. Does the run score in either case?

RULING: The difference between the two plays is the first is a force out and the second is not.

(1) The runner is considered forced out because they were legally tagged out before reaching the base they were forced to advance to by the batter-runner. Therefore, the force out is the third out so the run does not score.

(2) The runner has attained the base to which they were forced and then was tagged out, making it a timing play with the run scoring.

(Rules 12.10.2, 12.11.9, 12.12.11, 6.2.3.1 and 6.2.3.2)

RUNNING THE BASES, MISSING A BASE, TAGGING UP AFTER A CAUGHT FLY BALL

A.R. 12-18. A runner is assumed to have acquired a base even if they miss it but what constitutes missing a base? Clearly if a runner rounds a base but misses the corner, an appeal for missing a base applies but what if the runner is forced to avoid several players at the advancing base of a rundown and they miss the base by ten feet and then attempt to circle back?

RULING: If a runner passes a base but has failed to touch it, they are considered to have touched it if they are within a body's length. If they

are farther than that from the base, they have not yet acquired it for the purpose of base awards and appeals.

(Rules 12.11.1, 7.1.1.2 and 12.11.11)

A.R. 12-19. With one out and runners on first and third bases, the batter singles, apparently scoring the runner from third base. The runner from first base advances to third base but misses second base. The batter-runner rounds first base and is tagged out for the second out when the defense throws behind them. The defense then appeals the runner missed second base for the third out but does the run score now that there is no force?

RULING: The run does not score because the runner who is properly appealed to have missed second base is the third out and they were forced to advance at the time they missed second base.

(Rules 12.11.1 EFFECT and 6.2.3.1)

A.R. 12-20. The batter singles to the outfield with the bases loaded and one out. The runner from third base scores and the coach holds up the next runner at third base. The runner from first base is halfway between second and third bases and heading back to second base. The batter-runner has rounded second base. Upon seeing the runner ahead of them retreating, the batter-runner cuts through the infield without retouching second base to return to first base. A fan is yelling for them to go back to touch second base so the batter-runner leaves first base. The defense throws to the first baseplayer to tag them (although they are confused as to why.) A rundown ensues with the batter-runner between first and second bases. In the meantime, the runner from third base tries to score and is thrown out. While that tag is applied at the plate, both remaining runners move up to third and second bases, respectively. When play ends, the defense appeals that the batter-runner standing on second base did not retouch it on the way back to first base. Pertinent summary – the steps of the batter-runner who is standing on second base were: touched first base, touched second base, missed second base on way back to first base, touched first base, standing on second base. Are they out on appeal for not re-touching second base on the way back to first base?

RULING: Upon appeal, the batter-runner is out for failing to re-touch second base. They are the third out, although the runner who started on third base does score because the third out is a timing play, not a force out.

(Rule 12.11.2)

A.R. 12-21. The batter hits a ball that the right fielder dives for but misses allowing it to roll all the way to the foul pole. The batter-runner misses first base but touches all the rest including home plate when their teammates get their attention and tell them to touch first base. Without leaving the field, they run directly to first base, touch it, and slide safely into second base by the time the ball is returned to the infield.

RULING: The batter-runner may return to touch a missed base while the ball is live; however, they must touch all bases in reverse order in order to nullify missing a base. If properly appealed, they would be

declared out. If not appealed, play would continue with the player on second base as if they had just hit a double.

(Rules 12.11.2, 7.1.4 and 12.11.3)

A.R. 12-22. With no one out and a runner on first base, the batter hits a fly ball to left field that looks to be beyond the left fielder, but they miraculously catch it. The runner advances and rounds second base and seeing the catch, retreats directly to first base without retouching second base. The left fielder excitedly throws the ball to first base but the ball sails out of play.

- (1) Because the base runner had touched second base, is the two base award to home plate?
- (2) If the base runner is awarded third base on the overthrow, can they abandon their path to first base to retouch second base, then tag up at first base and then accept the two base award?
- 3) Or because the ball is dead, can they simply go to third base?

RULING: (1) The two base award would be to third base since the base runner last legally occupied first base.

(2) Even though the ball is dead, if the base runner does not retouch second base, return to first base and then advance to second and third bases, they are vulnerable to an appeal.

(3) If the base runner simply goes to third base, they would be vulnerable to an appeal for having not retouched second base.

(Rule 12.11.2)

A.R. 12-23. Following a called strike, the runner who was on first base walks slowly toward second base, following the rim of grass separating the infield and outfield. The catcher has possession of the ball and watches as the runner stops midway between the second baseplayer and their base. To force the action, the catcher returns the ball to the pitcher in the circle who does nothing except look around. When the pitcher receives the ball, the runner begins to move toward second base taking tiny little steps, moving very slowly along the edge of the outfield grass trying to draw a throw. At what point does this non-traditional base path become a travesty of the game?

RULING: The runner may establish this base path as long as no fielder has possession of the ball and is attempting a tag. The look-back rule requires them to continue their direction, without change, now that the ball is in the pitcher's possession in the circle and the pitcher is not making a play. In the end, the runner still must come to the base and the defense may choose to play on them or not but it would be hard to apply travesty of the game to this legal base running.

(Rules 12.11.3, 12.11.5 and 12.17.3.2)

A.R. 12-24. With no outs, a 1-0 count on the batter and runners on first and third base the runner from first steals on a swinging strike. They intentionally run into right field in order to make it more difficult for the defense to make a play on them so the runner from third can score more easily.

RULING: The ball is dead, the runner from first is out, and the base runner at third must return to the third base. The batter will have a 1-1 count.

(Rule 12.11.3)

A.R. 12-25. A batter hits a deep fly to center field which looks like it will be caught. They run to first base, head down, touch the base and turn and walk back down the line toward home and their third base dugout. The wind blows the ball down and the center fielder does not catch the ball. The center fielder picks up the ball and throws it into the infield where the pitcher cuts it off while in the circle. The base coach directs the batter-runner to turn around and run back to first base. The batter-runner stops their retreat to the dugout, looks at the pitcher, then breaks for first base. The pitcher throws the ball to first base where the first baseplayer tags the batter-runner with the ball. For purposes of correctly scoring the play: Is the batter-runner out when they stepped back toward home? If not, are they out for stopping and reversing their direction with the pitcher holding the ball motionless in the circle? Or are they out on the tag?

RULING: Although a batter-runner may not step back toward home plate to avoid or delay a tag by the fielder, Rule 12.10.4 does not apply because the steps back toward the plate were not to avoid or delay the tag. The look-back rule allows for a runner who is in motion when the ball is returned to the pitcher within the circle, to continue in the direction they are going or immediately and directly going in the other direction. Once they determine that direction, they cannot change (unless one of the circumstances in Rule 12.16.3 occurs). Therefore, the batter-runner who is dejectedly moving along the foul line toward home as the ball reaches the pitcher in the circle may now choose to reverse their direction and attempt to return to first base. However, they are out on the tag.

(Rules 12.11.4 and 12.17.3)

A.R. 12-26. With a base runner on second base, the catcher obstructs the batter, who somehow puts the ball in play to the shortstop. They field the ball and throw out the base runner from second, who overslides third base and is immediately tagged while off the base. The batter attains first base safely.

RULING: Catcher obstruction is canceled because the batter and each base runner advanced at least one base on the batted ball. Therefore, the result of the batted ball stands.

(Rules 12.11.9 and 9.5.2)

A.R. 12-27. With a runner on second base and two outs, the batter singles to center field. The throw to the plate is cut off and relayed to second base and a tag applied to the batter-runner. The runner from second base missed home plate just before the out at second base.

RULING: The run scores on the timing play if there is no appeal or no attempt to touch home plate. If the runner returns to touch home plate, the run does not score because the third out preceded touching home plate.

(Rule 12.11.12.1)

A.R. 12-28. With a runner on second base, the batter hits a single. The runner misses third base on their way toward home plate, but decides to retreat to it once they see the throw come from the outfield to the catcher. On their retreat, they inadvertently collide with the third baseplayer who then receives a throw from the catcher and tags them out. The umpire awards the runner third base on the obstruction. Can the defense still appeal that the runner missed third base in order to get the out?

RULING: No. The appeal is not upheld because the runner returned to the missed base on the obstruction award. (See Rule 9.5.4.)

(Rules 12.11.15 and 9.5.4)

A.R. 12-29. With no one out and runners on first and second bases, a long fly ball is hit over the left fielder's head. The fielder catches the ball with their back to the infield, crashes into the wall and recoils back into the field, lying motionless from the collision. The glove is not in plain sight of the chasing umpire who does not signal the catch until getting all the way out to the fallen left fielder. Meantime, both runners left on the pitch and have circled the bases and touched home plate.

- (1) Can both runners return to tag up?
- (2) Must they return in reverse order to avoid a "passing the previous runner" violation?
- (3) If the chasing umpire suspends play as soon as the catch is verified and the seriousness of the injury is determined, can the defense prevent the runners from returning and obtain two outs by immediately appealing the failure to tag up?

RULING: (1) No. The lead runner is out on proper appeal because they cannot return to a base left too soon if a trailing runner has scored. (Rule 12.11.16.2).

(2) Only the runner who started on first base may attempt to return so the "passing the previous runner" rule (Rule 12.4.3) does not apply.

(3) If the umpire suspends play due to the seriousness of the injury, apply the Exception in Rule 6.11.3.3, which allows for umpire discretion in awarding bases. Then, if the runners fail to tag in order to accept their base awards, they would be out on appeal (Rule 12.11.15).

(Rules 12.11.15, 12.11.16, 12.4.3 and 6.11.3.3)

ABANDONING A BASE OR EFFORT TO RUN THE BASES

A.R. 12-30. If a batter believes they have struck out and leaves the playing area (e.g., enters the dugout), do the same penalties apply as if they were a runner who abandons their base or a batter-runner who fails to advance on a base award?

RULING: Uniquely, the batter may be summoned from off the field of play and return to complete their turn at bat without penalty. No other offensive player has the same benefit of abandoning their position and returning without being declared out. Rule 12.12

applies to a runner abandoning a base or effort to run the bases, not to a batter abandoning the batter's box.

(Rule 12.12)

A.R. 12-31. With a runner on third base and one out, the batter receives ball four. The offensive team is located on the first base sideline and as the batter is walking to first base, they stop to have a conversation with the on-deck/upcoming batter. After a five or six second conversation, they "high five" and both players take their respective positions. The defensive coach believes the batter-runner is guilty of abandoning their base running responsibilities and should be called out.

RULING: Because the ball is live and the batter-runner is obligated to advance on the base on balls, there should be common sense application as to the type and length of delay that occurs before the umpire intervenes and directs the batter-runner to immediately advance to the base or be declared out. Batters who do not disrupt play, but quickly remove elbow padding or even hand their bat to the on-deck batter before proceeding to first base should not be called out. However, if after being directed to advance, the batter-runner refuses to advance, delays advancing, or ignores the direction, they should be declared out for abandoning an effort to run the bases.

(Rule 12.12)

A.R. 12-32. With a runner on first base and one out in the bottom of the seventh inning, the batter hits a ground ball to the second baseplayer who throws to second base to force out the runner for the second out. The batter-runner overruns first base (thinking they were out) and takes a wide turn which takes them near the sideline fence. The first base coach successfully calls them back to the base. Is this considered abandoning a base and should the batter-runner be called out for the third and final out of the game?

RULING: The batter-runner would not be guilty of abandoning their base for simply turning into foul territory toward the sideline fence. They would be out, however, if they had left the field of play or obviously headed into their dugout or if they attempted to advance to second with the pitcher in possession of the ball within the pitcher's circle.

(Rules 12.12.4 and 12.17.3.5)

A.R. 12-33. In the bottom of the seventh inning of a tied game, bases are loaded with two outs. The batter (1) singles to right field or (2) the batter walks. The base runner on third base scores but the base runner from first base joins in the celebration rather than advancing to second base.

RULING: In both (1) and (2), if the offending base runner is declared out for abandonment it is a timing play, and if the base runner from third touched home plate before the out, the run would score. If, however, the defense properly appeals that the forced base runner did not touch the base to which they were forced, the run would not score. This appeal can be made after the third out.

(Rules 12.12.5, 6.2.3.1 and Note)

BASE AWARDS

A.R. 12-34. The ball is hit down the right field line with a runner on first base and no one out. The right fielder sprints to the home run fence, reaches up to catch the ball, bobbles but never controls it, and crashes through the breakaway fence in fair territory. The fence is lying on the ground with the fielder sprawled on top of it when the ball first comes to rest in the middle of the fence.

RULING: Because the uncaught fly ball is beyond the home run fence when it first touches the ground, it would be ruled a home run in NCAA play. Even if the ball deflected off the outfielder over the home run fence, it would still be a home run unless the scorer judges they should have caught the ball with ordinary effort, in which case, it would become a four base error. In establishing "over the home run fence" on a collapsed fence, the plane is established from the base of the fence on the ground to the top of the fence when it is correctly positioned, not the top of the fence as it is falling or has fallen away from the field. One of the disadvantages of a temporary, break away fence is that balls do not remain in play that on normal fenced fields, would remain live.

(Rule 12.13.5.2)

COLLISIONS

A.R. 12-35. With a runner on second base, the batter-runner bunts the ball toward the pitcher. The pitcher tosses the ball to the first baseplayer for the force out and then the batter-runner slides feet first into the first baseplayer who was stretching to receive the toss. The runner from second base now advances to third once the first baseplayer is taken out by the batter-runner.

RULING: The umpire may declare the batter-runner out and ejected if malicious contact is ruled. If not, the umpire may rule a double play if the timing is such that the retired batter-runner then interfered with a fielder attempting a play on another runner. The third option would be the umpire rules only the batter-runner out if the play was close at first base and the slide was not malicious.

(Rules 12.14.2, 12.14.5 and 12.18.1.5.1)

A.R. 12-36. The right-handed batter who lays down a bunt in front of home plate is on a collision course with the catcher if they run in a direct line to first base. Each player at this point is acting appropriately, the batter taking a path in a direct line to first base, and the catcher coming out from behind home plate to field the ball.

- (1) Did the batter alter direction in any way and draw contact in an attempt to receive an obstruction call?
- (2) Did the catcher alter their attempt to field the ball in any way so as to draw an interference call?
- (3) Could the catcher actually make an out on the play?

RULING: (1) If yes, interference is ruled.

(2) If yes, obstruction if ruled

(3) If no, no call.

(Rule 12.14.5)

A.R. 12-37. The batter-runner unintentionally collides with the first baseplayer who is attempting to make a play on an errant throw up the line (toward home plate).

RULING: The ruling will depend on whether the first baseplayer has possession of the ball when the inadvertent collision happens. If the fielder steps to catch the errant throw and has possession of the ball in their glove or bare hand, this will not be ruled obstruction. This is the result of the "normal" flow of the game, and the play should be ruled incidental contact with no effect. However, if the fielder steps into the base runner's path to field the errant throw and does not have possession of the ball in their glove or hand, this will be ruled obstruction by the fielder. Note: The fielder is not protected as they would be if they were the first fielder fielding a batted ball.

(Rule 12.14.5)

A.R. 12-38. The runner on second base takes their lead directly toward the shortstop, who is 10 to 12 feet behind (the outfield side) the baseline between second and third bases (as opposed to a leadoff directly toward third base). The ball is hit directly over second base so the runner is in the fielder's direct line to the ball. Must the runner go around the shortstop to avoid contact? The runner appears to be trying to draw an obstruction call.

RULING: The shortstop must be given an opportunity to field the ball with consideration for how deep they are playing and the speed and trajectory of the ball. If the runner interferes with their reasonable opportunity to make a play, that's interference. If they do not have a reasonable opportunity to play the batted ball, but impedes the base runner, this would be obstruction. A fielder is protected if they are the first fielder fielding a batted ball.

(Rules 12.14.5, 12.18.2.1.5 and 9.5.4.1)

LEAVING A BASE

A.R. 12-39. If a play involves both leaving early and a defensive rule violation, should the umpires move the runners based on the offensive coach's decision and then again once the defensive coach makes their decision?

RULING: Like the other option plays, base runners should not be taken off bases nor advanced based on the first option selection if the defense also has an option to choose. Players should be moved only following the final decision.

(Rule 12.15.2)

A.R. 12-40. May a runner who mistimes leaving the base on a pitch, reset themselves and as long as they are 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 they break contact with the base, even if they try to reestablish contact before release,

they would be in violation and the umpire will have signaled delayed dead ball, provided the pitcher has not delayed their release in order to dupe the runner into leaving early.

(Rule 12.15.2)

A.R. 12-41. With a runner on first base, the pitcher licks their fingers and delivers the pitch without wiping their hand, the runner leaves early, and the batter hits into a 6-4-3 double play, however, the shortstop is an illegal player.

RULING: The resolution will depend on the timing of the report of the illegal player, but let's start with the sequences most advantageous to the offense. The illegal pitch is addressed before leaving early, so the options on the illegal pitch are for the offense to have their two players out from the double play or award a ball to the batter and return the runner to first base. (Rule 10.8). Obviously the offense will take the latter so that becomes option one for the defense (base runner on first and batter still at the plate) or the penalty for leaving early (Rule 12.14.2), which is the base runner is out and the batter still at the plate. Obviously the defense will take the latter. Now that play is about to resume and before the pitch to the next batter, the offensive coach could notify the umpire of the illegal player, who will then be ejected and the coach will have the option of the result of the play (no one on, batter at the plate) or nullify the play and have the batter return to the plate with no one on (Rule 8.3.4.2.4 effect, but there is no base runner to advance). Notifying the umpire at this time does not have the maximum effect, but it does remove the shortstop from play so that would be a decision the coach would have to make. Of course, the coach could allow the illegal player to stay and report it at a more advantageous time when base runners would advance.

The other timing option is for the offensive coach to bring the illegal player to the attention of the umpires before they resolve the illegal pitch and leaving early infractions, but by doing so, the last option would belong to the defense for the leaving early violation. As in the other cases, the shortstop would be ejected, but the offense will give up their ability to make the final selection of results.

(Rule 12.15.2)

A.R. 12-42. 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 4.10.5, "Umpires 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 their 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 12.15.2, 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 12.15.2)

A.R. 12-43. With the bases loaded, the batter takes the pitch but the runners on first and third base both leave early. Are both runners out.

RULING: The defensive coach may choose between taking the results of the play (a ball or strike as called by the plate umpire, bases remain loaded) or “no pitch”, the batter remains at bat and the offending runners are both declared out.

(Rule 12.15.2)

OCCUPYING BASES

A.R. 12-44. With runners on first and second bases, the batter hits the ball to the third baseplayer playing off the line. The lead runner begins to advance, but seeing the defender with the ball in the baseline, they retreat to second base. At the same time, the runner from first base advances and is also on second base. The batter-runner safely reaches first base as the third baseplayer goes over and tags both runners on second base. Which base runner is out when tagged?

RULING: In general, the first of two base runners occupying the same base is entitled to hold it until they advance to the next base; however, the exception is if the runner is forced to vacate the base. Because the lead runner was forced to advance and did not, they are the one out, not the trailing runner.

(Rule 12.16)

LOOK-BACK RULE

A.R. 12-45. In the last half of the seventh inning with the score tied, there’s a runner on first base with one out. The batter hits a sharp ground ball to the third baseplayer who makes a great play and gets the force out at second base. The ball is thrown back to the pitcher in the circle, and the batter-runner is on first base when the pitcher decides to run to the third baseplayer to give them a high five for a good play. Seeing them leave the circle, the runner takes off and slides safely into second base. The defensive coach protests that the runner could not leave their base once the ball was in the circle.

RULING: If the pitcher carries the ball out of the circle, the look-back rule is not in effect and runners are free to advance with liability to be put out.

(Rules 12.17.1 and 12.17.4.2)

A.R. 12-46. With a runner on third base, the batter receives a base on balls and the ball immediately goes back to the pitcher in the circle. The batter-runner crosses first base and continues down the first base line, making an arc at a

distance judged reasonable by the umpire and continuing toward second base. The pitcher cocks their arm in an obvious attempt at a play on the batter-runner at which time the runner on third base leaves their base and inches toward home plate. The pitcher now brings their arm back down to their side so that they are no longer making a play. Is the look-back rule back in effect and does the runner on third base have to immediately make a decision to return to third base or advance to home? Does the batter-runner have to continue to second base after the pitcher is no longer making a play or are they allowed to stop and assess the play even though the pitcher is no longer making a play on them?

RULING: Once the pitcher makes a play, both runners are released from the restrictions of the look-back rule. It is not a time related play (meaning the base runner is free only during the time the pitcher is making a play); it is all or nothing (that is, if the pitcher makes a play, the base runners are released; if the pitcher makes no play, the base runners are restricted to their bases). The fact that the pitcher started to make a play and changed their mind (and stopped) does not shorten the amount of time the runners have to advance or return. So now that the pitcher is making a play, the runners may stay, advance or retreat, but if a stalemate occurs because the runners and pitcher are not continuing to play, the umpire may suspend play and return the runners to their bases in order to resume play.

(Rule 12.17.5)

A.R. 12-47. There are no outs and runners are on first and second bases when the batter singles to right field. The throw goes directly from the right fielder to the pitcher who is in the pitcher's circle. The batter-runner is standing on first base; the speedy runner who started on first base advanced all the way to third base; the slower runner who started on second base, advanced to third base, rounded it but decided to return. That puts two runners on third base at the time the pitcher receives the ball. For a few seconds, the pitcher is oblivious to the two runners together until:

- (1) a teammate yells to them to throw the ball to third base so the trailing runner can be tagged out.
- (2) they look at third base but make no play.

RULING: (1) If the pitcher initiates a play, the runners are no longer restricted to their bases, so the trailing runner can retreat or the lead runner advance. The ball is live and players are in jeopardy of being put out.

(2) The trailing runner is called out for not being in contact with their base (second) once the look back rule was in effect. The pitcher is under no obligation to make a play.

(Rule 12.17.3.1)

A.R. 12-48. There's a runner on first base following a single. The pitcher has possession of the ball in the circle when:

- (1) with only a single foot on the base, the runner lifts it off the base to clean off the bottom of their cleats, thus breaking contact with the base.

- (2) the runner takes a step off the base to hand their base coach the elbow guard they use for batting.
- (3) the runner walks off the base to groom the dirt area which they churned up as they ran out their single.

In all cases, the runner does not attempt to advance, gains no advantage, so should the umpire ignore the violations?

RULING: In (1), (2) and (3), the runner should be called out unless they asked for and were granted time by the umpire. The umpire should enforce the rule without assigning intent of the runner or whether or not an advantage is gained. Call all aspects of the game based on the objective actions that are displayed rather than to assign value or intent and then decide if the action warrants a penalty. Or some, that might seem "nitpicky," but it does provide predictable, consistent application of the rules without having to judge intent OR whether or not a "real" advantage is gained. That said, it is good preventative umpiring to anticipate these possible actions. For example, if the area around the base is churned up at the conclusion of play, the umpire can suspend play in anticipation of the player's desire to smooth the ground. If the runner then simply walks off the base without requesting time, you have no violation as play was already suspended.

(Rules 12.17.3.3 and 12.15)

INTERFERENCE

A.R. 12-49. With the bases loaded and one out, the batter hits a high infield fly ball toward first base. The umpire invokes the infield fly rule, however, no infielder attempts to catch the ball. The ball lands in fair territory where it contacts the batter-runner. The first baseplayer subsequently fields the rebounded ball and tags the runner who started on, but is standing a step off, first base. What rule applies?

RULING: As soon as the ball and runner make contact, the ball is declared dead. Since the contact occurred in fair territory, the batter-runner is out by application of the infield fly rule and runners are returned to the bases occupied at the time of the pitch. Had the contact occurred in foul territory, the correct call would have been foul ball. Even though the batter-runner had been declared out on the infield fly and subsequent contact occurred, it is not batter-runner interference because no fielder was attempting to make a play at the time of the contact.

(Rule 12.18.1.3.1)

A.R. 12-50. The batter-runner unintentionally kicks the ball that had deflected off the catcher who attempted to field a dropped third strike.

RULING: Live ball, no interference.

(Rule 12.18.1.4)

A.R. 12-51. A slap bunt results in the ball quickly being scooped up by the catcher right in front of home plate. The catcher is ready to throw, but seeing

the batter-runner in their way with one or both feet out of the runner's lane, they hesitate, eventually throwing accurately to first base but the throw:

- (1) arrives late.
- (2) hits the batter-runner two strides before the base.
- (3) hits the batter-runner on their last stride before the base.

RULING: In (1), the batter-runner has not interfered if a fielder does not throw or hesitates before throwing. For interference to apply, the batter-runner must be guilty of interfering with the fielder taking the throw at first base. If the fielder does not throw, hesitates and then throws late, or makes an errant throw, it is not possible to determine if the fielder taking the throw would have been interfered with. For example, if the catcher throws the ball three feet above the outstretched glove of the first baseplayer, the batter-runner will be safe by virtue of the throwing error, not because of interference with the first baseplayer taking a throw.

In (2) and (3) the batter-runner is out because they interfered with the first baseplayer taking the throw at first base. In (3), the rule allows the batter-runner to leave the lane on their last stride in order to touch first base. If they have not been running in the runner's lane, this would not apply since they can't leave the lane if they were not in the lane.

(Rule 12.18.1.5.2)

A.R. 12-52. With a runner on third base, the batter receives a base on balls and trots down to first base. After they are half way and the runner's lane has started, the catcher throws to first base in an attempt to keep the batter-runner from continuing to second base.

- (1) The throw hits the batter-runner who is in fair territory .
- (2) The throw hits a part of the runner's body which is over fair territory although their feet are both in the runner's lane.

Is this interference?

RULING: On the base award, the batter-runner cannot be put out solely as a result of a defender's action; that is to say, the batter-runner must somehow contribute to being declared out by violating a rule.

In (1), the batter-runner has violated Rule 12.18.1.5.2 which stipulates they shall not run outside the runner's lane and interfere with the fielder taking the throw at first base. The ball is dead, the batter-runner is out and each other runner returns to the last base occupied at the time of the pitch.

In (2), there is no interference since the batter-runner's feet are within the runner's lane. (See also Rule 12.18.1.5 Note 2.) The ball is live and runners may advance at their own risk. Note: In (2), if the batter-runner in the runner's lane intentionally interferes (e.g., by waving their hands), interference would be ruled.

(Rule 12.18.1.5.2)

A.R. 12-53. Bases are loaded, no outs and the batter hits a ground ball back to the pitcher. The pitcher throws to home plate for the force out. One out. Then the catcher attempts a throw to first. The batter-runner is not running in the runner's lane. The throw hits the batter-runner and bounds beyond first base into the outfield. The runner on second base scores and the runner from first base is on third base. The umpire crew gets together to discuss how to adjudicate this play. They rule the batter-runner out for interference. They return runners to second and third bases because they were forced to advance.

RULING: The runner out at home plate remains as that. This out occurred before the interference. The batter-runner is out for interference for being out of the runner's lane and interfering with the defensive player at first being able to catch the ball. Then return the runners to first and second bases based on the Effect for Rule 12.18.1.5.2: "each base runner not put out prior to the interference must return to the last base occupied at the time of the pitch." The interference occurred before the batter-runner reached first base. The offending team cannot gain an advantage with the batter-runner's interference. Rule 4.10.5 states, "Umpires shall not impose an effect on a team for any infraction of a rule when imposing the effect would be an advantage to the offended team." The inning continues with runners at first and second bases and two outs.

(Rule 12.18.1.5.2)

A.R. 12-54. The score is tied in the bottom of the seventh inning with the bases loaded and two outs. The batter has a full count and the next pitch is ball four. As they are heading to first base and the winning run is coming in to score, the catcher throws the ball toward first base and hits the batter-runner in the back. The defensive coach believes the runner should be called out for interference which would end the inning still tied.

RULING: There is no play to be made on anyone and no reason to throw the ball into the back of the batter-runner. The umpires correctly allow the runner to score assuming that all players complete their base running responsibilities and touch the bases to which they were forced.

(Rules 12.18.1.5.2 and 12.11.1)

A.R. 12-55. The runner on first base steals on the pitch of a 3-1 count and two outs. The pitch is a close outside pitch, which causes the catcher to come up throwing to second base before and during the time the umpire is calling the pitch a ball. The batter, now batter-runner, is crossing in front of the plate and freezes as the catcher is throwing to second base. The catcher makes contact with the batter-runner and their throw sails into center field.

RULING: For there to be interference on the batter-runner on this play, the interference has to be intentional so that would be for the umpire to judge. If it is ruled intentional, then enforce Rule 12.18.1.6. If it is not intentional, it is incidental contact that results in the ball remaining live.

(Rules 12.18.1.6 and 12.13.2)

A.R. 12-56. The rule says the base runner may not contact a fair batted ball, while off base, before it touches a fielder or before it passes an infielder (other than the pitcher) who has a reasonable chance to make a play. So doesn't that apply to just about every batted ball because the first and third baseplayers play up toward the batter's boxes which means the batted ball always passes an infielder?

RULING: No, the rule refers to a ball that is within range of an infielder, but has not yet reached them. A runner cannot contact that batted ball while running in front of the first fielder with a chance to field it. So a ball hit directly to the second baseplayer would be judged when it passes them, not when it passes the first baseplayer who had no play on it. The first baseplayer's position is irrelevant because they are not expected to field a batted ball hit directly to the second baseplayer.

(Rule 12.18.2)

A.R. 12-57. Runner on first base with no one out. The first baseplayer is playing in for the bunt, but the batter hits a screaming line drive to the first baseplayer's right that the second baseplayer also has absolutely no chance of reaching. The ball hits off the runner's shoulder (who is off the base) and dribbles into right field. The batter-runner barely beats the throw from the right fielder to first base. Is interference called?

RULING: The runner may not contact an untouched, fair batted ball, after it passes a fielder if another fielder has a chance to make a play so if, in the umpire's judgment, the right fielder had a chance to make a play, rule interference. The rule is not intended to protect only the four infielders, but any fielder, regardless of where they are positioned as long as they have an opportunity to make a play.

(Rule 12.18.2.1.2)

A.R. 12-58. With the bases loaded and no one out, the batter hits a declared infield fly right in the baseline between first and second bases. The runner, on their return to first base following their lead-off, runs into the first baseplayer attempting to field the fly ball.

- (1) The runner from third base tags and advances home;
- (2) The runners on second and third bases do not attempt to advance.

In either case, is this interference even though the runner contacts the fielder who is already credited with the put out and is not making an additional play?

RULING: In (1) and (2), the batter is out on the infield fly and the ball is immediately dead when the base runner interferes with the first baseplayer making the catch. The runner from first base is out on interference and the other base runners must return to the bases held at the time of the interference.

(Rule 12.18.2.1.5)

A.R. 12-59. With no one out and a runner on third base, the batter squibs a ball down the third base line. The third baseplayer charges the ball with their

glove down in fair territory but their feet in foul territory as if they are going to scoop up the ball to make a throw to first base. The runner, also in foul territory, makes slight contact with the fielder before they touch the ball which does eventually roll off the chalk into foul territory.

RULING: The ball is dead as soon as the base runner contacts the fielder regardless of where the contact occurs (fair or foul territory), but the result of the play will be subject to the umpire's judgment. Rule interference if the fielder might have had a play. If the ball was fair, the base runner is out and the batter is placed at first and credited with either a base hit or fielder's choice according to the official scorer's judgement. If the ball was foul but might have been fair at the time the fielder contacted it, the base runner is out and the batter is charged with a foul ball. But if the ball was going to remain foul or be foul when the fielder could have gotten to it, rule the ball foul with no effect on the base runner. Interference only applies to fair balls, foul fly balls and foul ground balls that might become fair. In all other cases, a foul ball and no interference is ruled but the benefit of the doubt goes to the defense.

(Rules 12.18.2.1.5 and 12.18.2.1.6)

A.R. 12-60. There are runners on first and second bases when a slow roller is hit to the second baseplayer. The base runner leaving first base makes minor contact with the fielder as they came forward across the baseline to field the batted ball. The second baseplayer was able to shovel the ball to first base for the out which was the only play they had. Since the second baseplayer was not denied the opportunity to make a play, is it a no call or does the contact constitute interference?

RULING: The effect for a runner contacting a fielder in the act of fielding a batted ball is an immediate dead ball so in this case, you would not know if they could or could not have completed a play. Although the contact was not catastrophic, contact was made and in an effort to discourage all inappropriate contact and to protect the fielder who is concentrating on the batted ball (and is therefore usually blindsided by the runner), the ball is immediately dead, the runner is out and other runners are returned to the bases they held at the time of the interference.

(Rule 12.18.2.1.5)

A.R. 12-61. The batter hits a typical ground ball to the second baseplayer, but the runner from first base noticeably slows down or stops in order to time running in front of the fielder just as the batted ball is about to be fielded. The runner does not make contact but attempts to distract the fielder by being near the fielder as they field the ball. Can interference occur without physical contact such as this play?

RULING: Merely running in front of the fielder fielding the ball does not usually constitute interference; however, it could if the defense was prevented from making the play. Note: Contact is not required for interference to occur. For example, if a runner runs straight into

a base and the fielder who fielded the ball is unable to throw the ball because the runner is screening the receiver.

(Rule 12.18.2.1.5.2)

A.R. 12-62. On a batted ball that is knocked down, but not clearly fielded, what protection is afforded the fielder as they attempt to play the deflection?

RULING: The defender is protected when they are the first fielder to play a batted ball, but they retain protection only when they knock the ball in front of them such that the fielder still has an opportunity to make a play (generally within a step and a reach). If the ball is deflected farther away or goes past the fielder, they are no longer protected as they are then recovering a loose ball rather than fielding a batted ball.

(Rules 12.18.2.1.5.3 and 12.14.5 Note)

A.R. 12-63. With a runner on second base, the ball is hit to the third baseplayer's left and is deflected by them toward the middle of the infield. The shortstop moves to make a play on the deflected ball, but is unintentionally contacted by the runner so they make no throw.

RULING: If the contact was inadvertent, it is not interference and the ball remains live. The runner cannot reasonably be expected to anticipate the direction and speed of a carom off a defender and avoid contact with a second fielder moving to play the ball. However, if the umpire judges that the base runner intentionally interferes with the second fielder, the ball would be dead and the base runner would be out.

(Rule 12.18.2.1.5.5)

A.R. 12-64. With a runner on third base, the batter hits a foul pop-up between the third base line and the dugout. As they are moving toward the ball, the third baseplayer makes contact with the runner.

RULING: The effect will depend on the umpire's judgement. The umpire should delay a dead ball call until they can determine if the ball is playable and by whom. If the umpire judges that the ball was playable and the third baseplayer was the most likely fielder to make the play, the ball is dead, the base runner is out and the batter is charged with a foul ball. If the umpire judges that the ball was not playable or not playable by the third baseplayer, the contact will have no effect. The umpire may take into account where the ball is when contact with the fielder is made but also where the ball ultimately lands or settles.

(Rules 12.18.2.1.6 and 12.18.2.6.1)

A.R. 12-65. Runners are on first and third bases when the batter receives ball four. As the batter-runner is advancing to first base, the runner who was on first base, advances toward second base. For some unknown reason, the pitcher throws the ball to the shortstop, and they play on the runner between first and second bases. Immediately after the throw from the pitcher, the lead runner from third base, scores. The runner, who is in a rundown between first and

second bases, then deliberately slaps the ball away from the shortstop who is tossing the ball to the first baseplayer for a potential tag.

RULING: The run scores during the live ball rundown. At the time of the slapped ball, the umpire should immediately declare the ball dead to stop additional action and since there is no play to be made, award the runner who was forced to advance, second base and the batter-runner is awarded first base on the walk. There is no penalty to be applied because the runners were only advancing to the bases they were awarded and not beyond.

(Rules 12.18.2.2 and 12.13.7.1)

A.R. 12-66. With a runner on first base, the batter hits a ground ball to the second baseplayer. They field the ball cleanly and toss it to the shortstop for the first out of the inning. As the runner is in the baseline between first and second, the shortstop attempts to throw the ball to first base to complete a double play, however, their throw hits the runner or their attached equipment or the actions of the base runner cause the fielder to have to alter their throw. The batter-runner reaches first.

RULING: The benefit of the doubt goes to the defense who must be allowed the opportunity to make or complete a play since retired runners are not afforded the same protection as live runners. The base runner closest to home would be declared out if a retired runner interfered with a defender's opportunity to make a play. The umpires must consider these factors: (1) Does the retired runner make a legitimate attempt not to interfere with the throw (e.g., slides if they're close enough to the bag, veers to get out of the throwing lane or drops/ducks to avoid the thrown ball)? (2) Does the defensive player intentionally try to throw at the retired runner whose actions would otherwise not impact the throw? (3) Is it simply an errant throw? In these three situations, the retired runner would not be charged with interference and the ball would remain alive. These same three factors would apply to a batter who has struck out and is still in the batter's box when they interfere with the catcher's attempt to throw out a base runner.

(Rule 12.18.3.1)

A.R. 12-67. With the bases loaded and no outs, a batted ball ricochets off the pitcher and just as the shortstop is about to field the slow roller, the ball hits the runner leaving second base. Must the runner attempt to avoid the deflected ball?

RULING: Once the ball ricochets off the pitcher, the runner is not out if hit by the batted ball unless the umpire rules the runner intentionally initiated the contact with the ball or intentionally interfered with the shortstop as they field the ball to make a play. Having time to avoid the contact may be different than intentionally getting hit.

(Rules 12.18.2.6.3, 12.1.3 and 12.18.2.1.5.5)

A.R. 12-68. How is it possible to have a fair batted ball hit a base runner in foul territory?

RULING: The key here is that the ball is fair so likely it deflected off a base or a defender and then contacts the base runner. As long as no infielder has a play on the ball, the ball is live.

(Rule 12.18.2.6.6)

A.R. 12-69. Base runners on first and third bases with one out. The batter hits a ground ball to the shortstop, who throws to second base for the second out. During the attempt to throw out the batter-runner, the base runner who started on first base interferes with the throw. Meanwhile, the base runner on third base has crossed home plate (before the interference).

RULING: On the interference, the base runner closest to home plate is called out (the batter-runner). Since the batter-runner is the third out, the run does not score.

(Rule 12.18.3.1)

A.R. 12-70. In the bottom of the seventh inning of a tie game with a base runner on second base, the batter grounds the ball to the shortstop, who throws the ball over the first baseman's head and out of play. As the base runner is rounding third base, for the walk-off winning run, the dugout clears and players slap high fives along the third-base line.

RULING: For a first violation of Rule 12.18.3.4, issue a warning to the offending team. If a warning has already been issued, the base runner is out and credited with reaching only third base. The batter is placed on the base legally touched at the time of the interference.

(Rule 12.18.3.4)

A.R. 12-71. In the top of the first inning, the leadoff batter reaches base safely and the second batter hits an out-of-the-park home run. As the lead runner rounds third base and is advancing to home plate, the bat handler slaps high fives with them. In addition, the dugout clears and teammates completely surround home plate in foul territory to celebrate, so as the lead runner crosses home plate, there is nowhere to go but to stay in fair territory as they wait to congratulate the home run hitter as they score.

RULING: Even though there are multiple rule violations of the rule, because the team has not yet received a warning, no one is declared out. Immediately after the batter-runner scores, the team is issued a warning for violation of Rule 12.18.3.4 and reminded that any subsequent violation of either portion of the rule will result in outs. Note: If the team had previously been warned, two outs would be assessed, the base runner would be out in violation of Rule 12.18.3.4.1 and the batter-runner would be out for the team's violation of Rule 12.18.3.4.2.

(Rule 12.18.3.4)

A.R. 12-72. After having been issued a team warning for the situation in A.R. 12-71 in the previous inning, the same team has a batter hit an out-of-the-park home run with a base runner on first base with two outs. The new bat handler slaps a high five with the batter before they touch home plate.

RULING: The batter will be the third out of the inning, but the location of the violation is relevant to the scoring of runs and effect on the batter. If the new bat handler contacts the batter-runner along the first baseline before they touch first base, the batter-runner is immediately out and no run scores because the batter-runner had not safely attained first base. If the new bat handler contacts the batter-runner along the third baseline, the batter is credited with a triple and whether or not the preceding runner scores is a timing play. If the runner touches home plate before the contact with the batter-runner, the run will score but if not, the run will not.

(Rule 12.18.3.4)

A.R. 12-73. A team has been warned in the first inning regarding a home run celebration that began in foul territory but expanded into fair territory. In the second inning, a batter hits an out-of-the-park home run. They drop their bat and as they round the bases and their teammates come out of the dugout to celebrate with them, a bat handler enters fair territory to retrieve the bat. Does this constitute a second violation of Rule 12.18.3.4 and therefore results in the batter being declared out?

RULING: No, the retrieval of the bat in fair territory would not be a violation, whether by a bat handler or a player, as they are performing a function and not entering fair territory to congratulate the runner. Rule 12.18.3.4.2 is intended to limit the area for celebrations and provide a clear view for the umpire of the runner touching home plate. One person removing a bat from in front of the plate does not compromise the rule or its intent.

(Rule 12.18.3.4.2)

A.R. 12-74. With a runner on second base, the third base coach screams, louder than anyone else, "Foul ball, foul ball" on a fair batted ball that dribbles out in front of home plate. The defense stops playing the ball while the runner arrives safely at third base and the batter eventually runs to first base where they were also safe due to the lack of play by the defense.

RULING: The coach is guilty of verbal interference which hindered the defender's opportunity to make a play. The ball is dead, runner closest to home plate is declared out and the batter-runner is placed at first base.

(Rule 12.18.4.1)

RULE 13

Misconduct

WARNINGS

A.R. 13-1. On a home run, a team gathered at home plate and once the batter-runner touched home plate, all those gathered around home plate fell down one at a time, as if they were shot. Is this an example of excessive celebration?

RULING: This is an example of why a warning was officially added as an option in 2014. In most cases, the umpire should, at a minimum, issue a warning to the head coach that should an orchestrated celebration occur again, it will be considered unsporting and the violator(s) will be ejected. However, considering the context of the specific game, the umpires also have the option of not warning the team and instead immediately applying the traditional effect for unsporting behavior or verbal misconduct in Rules 13.2 and 13.3.

(Rule 13.1)

A.R. 13-2. The pitching coach asks the plate umpire about the location of a pitch for two successive batters.

RULING: The plate umpire may advise the coach that questioning the strike zone is inappropriate and will not be tolerated. However, if the pitching coach is asking only to properly chart the pitch or provide guidance to the pitcher about making adjustments, the umpire may allow it.

(Rules 13.1.1 and 13.3.4)

A.R. 13-3. On the way to the coaches' box between innings, the base coach comments to the plate umpire that his batters are being forced to swing at pitches well out of the strike zone, which is hampering their offense.

RULING: The plate umpire issues a warning for questioning the strike zone and notes it on the team's lineup card.

(Rules 13.1.2 and 13.3.4)

A.R. 13-4. In the first inning, the visiting team head coach is given a formal warning for questioning the strike zone. In the second inning, the visiting team assistant coach questions umpire judgment on a close play or uses profanity towards an opponent or umpire. Should the assistant coach be given a warning or ejected?

RULING: Ejection. Any formal warning given for inappropriate behavior or misconduct (e.g., questioning strike zone, questioning calls based purely on umpires' judgment, unsportsmanlike remarks, etc.) is a team warning. Subsequent inappropriate behavior or

misconduct by any personnel of the warned team results in a behavioral ejection of the violator.

(Rules 13.1.2, 13.2.1.2 and 13.3.4)

EJECTIONS

A.R. 13-5.

- (1) With a runner on first base, the batter has a two ball count. The next pitch is called a ball but the batter drops their bat and proceeds to first base. The runner on first base advances to second base. The umpires return the batter to plate to complete their turn at bat but the runner remains at second base. Later in the game, the offensive coach comments to the plate umpire, "That play works every time".
- (2) A runner is on third base. Following a pitch, the catcher bounces out from behind the plate to simulate a pick off, stumbles and falls without releasing the ball. The third baseplayer, shortstop, and left fielder all act like they are chasing an overthrow down the third baseline. As the base runner attempts to score, they are tagged out by the catcher.

Are these plays legal or a form of interference/obstruction since their sole purpose is to deceive the opponent?

RULING: There are many elements of the game designed to deceive the opponent and gain an advantage. For example, throwing pitches other than straight fastballs is designed to deceive the opponent, as is taking a batting stance and then changing to bunt at the last second. Clearly, a practiced and executed hidden ball trick is easily identifiable, but a batter walking on ball three and a base runner advancing ahead of them may or may not be intentional. In the end, the onus is on the players (both offensive and defensive), coaches and umpires to know what is going on in the game and not be duped.

(Rule 13.2)

A.R. 13-6. What is the penalty if an ejected coach, although beyond the outfield fence, talks to a player in the bullpen who then goes to the dugout and relays, or apparently relays, information to the coaching staff?

RULING: Coaches are accountable for knowing the rules and that this is a violation which results in a forfeit. The coach was removed from further participation in the game and using a student-athlete to mitigate their removal is indefensible. Under Rules 13.2 and 6.20.1.9, the game shall be forfeited to the team not in violation.

(Rule 13.2)

A.R. 13-7. Home run and sideline fences completely surround a softball playing field and a second fence completely surrounds the softball venue (which includes the grandstands, concession stand and press box). A coach is ejected and does not choose to go beyond the home run fence, but instead leaves the complex (outside the second fence) to sit on an elevated TV camera platform, which is outside the venue fence, but above the press box.

RULING: The effect in Rule 13.2 requires an ejected coach to leave the playing field, dugout and team areas and be out of sight

and sound. Observing the game from the TV platform does not comply with out of sight and sound and, therefore, results in forfeit if observed by or brought to the attention of an umpire by the opposing team. If observed by the on-site administrator, the on-site administrator should immediately escort the ejected person to an appropriate location.

(Rule 13.2)

VERBAL MISCONDUCT

A.R. 13-8. Leading off an inning with a full count, the batter looks at a called third strike that is not secured by the catcher. Believing the pitch was not a strike, the batter makes a profane comment to the umpire and, at that moment, realizes dropped third strike applies so they run to first base. They arrive before the catcher can retrieve the pitch. The umpire ejects the player for use of profanity but are they also out for their unsporting conduct?

RULING: No. The player is guilty of verbal misconduct, which results in their ejection, but they safely attained first base and can be substituted for.

(Rule 13.3.1)

PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH AN UMPIRE OR OPPONENT

A.R. 13-9. A player is ejected under Rule 13.4 for a scuffle at the plate in the last game of a conference series. The next day, their team has a scheduled, nonconference doubleheader, which is rained out in the fourth inning of the first game. Although the ejected and suspended player is withheld from the four innings, it becomes "no game" when the weather takes a turn for the worse. The following day, their team begins a conference series. Is the player eligible to play in the conference series?

RULING: No, the player has not served the suspension. Although the games were previously scheduled, they were not played by virtue of being declared "no game" due to weather. The player must still serve their two game suspension.

(Rule 13.4)

EJECTION PREVENTS PLAY

A.R. 13-10. In the bottom of the seventh inning of the first game of a Sunday doubleheader, with two outs and a 2-2 count, the pitcher believes they delivered a strike but the umpire called the pitch a ball. On the next pitch, the batter hits a game ending, out-of-the-park home run and as they circle the bases, they taunt the defense. A shoving match ensues at the plate and, in the end, two players from each team are issued postgame ejections. While the home team has sufficient players to play game two, the visitors do not. Can the visiting coach request the penalties be staggered by the conference commissioner and if yes, how is that verified by the umpires prior to the game since the conference office is closed?

RULING: Because the visiting team is unable to field a team due to ejections, the visiting team must forfeit the second game of the

doubleheader and all four players will serve their postgame ejections in the next regularly scheduled and played game (Rule 13.2.3). The staggering option in Rule 13.6.2 is only permissible in the event that a team is unable to field a team due to player suspensions (not ejections). Had that been the case, the coach would be responsible for contacting the conference commissioner to obtain permission to play a specific player in the second game and defer their suspension in order to field a team. If permission could not be obtained prior to the scheduled start time of the second game, the game would be forfeited. If coach reported to the umpires that permission had been granted, the secretary-rules editor would be responsible for verification, so the umpire's role would be to file the incident report at their earliest opportunity.

(Rule 13.6.2)

A.R. 13-11. In pool play within a tournament, a bench clearing brawl results in several players from both teams being ejected and needing to serve suspensions. Team one has three of their eleven players affected and team two has both their catchers and both their third baseplayers involved although they have a twenty player roster. Rule 13.6.2 allows for the staggering of suspensions but how does that work?

RULING: In order to take advantage of the staggered suspension rule and avoid forfeits to the next opponents on each team's schedule, coaches must have previously worked with their conference office to determine the process and the order in which suspensions are served. In the event that has not happened or the conference has chosen not to make this accommodation, the teams will have to forfeit to their two future opponents as the players serve their suspensions. If a process has been determined:

(1) Team one will have to suspend two of its three players for its next two games and the final player for the two games that follows OR if the team uses the DP/Flex, it will take six games of one player sitting out each one in order to have the penalty satisfied.

(2) Team two may suspend all four players at once, but if that leads to an unsafe condition (such as no player with catching or third base experience being available), they may suspend one third baseplayer and catcher for the next two games and the other third baseplayer and catcher for the following two games.

In both cases, the suspensions cannot be deferred until the team plays a more desirable opponent. There must be some corrective action at the earliest opportunity, but not at the expense of players being asked to participate in some way they are unprepared for and that their safety might be compromised.

(Rule 13.6.2)

INCITING THE CROWD

A.R. 13-12. Does inciting a crowd only apply to games in which a large crowd is present or can it apply to a small crowd of friends and family of players?

RULING: The size of the crowd is irrelevant. If the action causes a disorganized group of people to suddenly lash out against authority or to exhibit "herd like" conduct rather than the individuals acting independently, the definition of inciting the crowd has been met and Rule 13.9 would apply. The on-site administrator is responsible for assisting the umpire crew in re-establishing sporting conditions.

(Rule 13.9)

RULE 14

Scoring

SCORING TERMS

A.R. 14-1. In the bottom of the seventh inning with no one out and the winning run on third base, the batter taps the ball to the pitcher who makes no throw to first base to prevent the winning run from scoring.

RULING: Credit the batter with a fielder's choice to gain first base and an additional fielder's choice if they gain second base due to indifference.

(Rule 14.1.7)

A.R. 14-2. In the bottom of the seventh inning with no one out, base runners on first and third bases, the base runner from first base advances to second base with no play by the catcher to prevent the winning run from scoring.

RULING: Credit the base runner with a fielder's choice to gain second base due to indifference.

(Rules 14.1.7, 14.6.2.5 and 14.14)

A.R. 14-3. In the top of the fourth inning, the home team is ahead 3-7. The visiting team has runners on first and third base with one out. The runner on first base takes off for second base on a typical play when the batter takes the pitch for a called strike. The catcher only looks at the lead runner and makes no effort to throw out the runner stealing second base. Is the runner credited with a stolen base, or is it defensive indifference since the defense obviously was willing to allowing the offense to take the base uncontested?

RULING: The intent of defensive indifference is to only address the specific situation where the outcome of the game (i.e., determining which team wins) dictates that the smart play would be no play. It does not apply to the situation described above in the first and third play in the middle innings of the game (but it would have if it was in the last inning and the runner on third was the winning run). In all other cases, the play would continue to be scored as it was in the past.

(Rule 14.1.7)

EXTRA-BASE HIT

A.R. 14-4. With the bases loaded, the batter hits a towering fly ball that falls in the glove of the center fielder at the warning track and then squirts out over the home run fence in fair territory. Is that a home run/grand slam or a four run error?

RULING: Rules 14.4.4 and 12.13.5.2 both refer to a fair batted fly ball that deflects over the fence as a home run without an exception

for an error. There is an exception in Rule 12.13.3.5 for a batted ball that caroms off the fence into the field of play and then off the fielder over the fence for a ground rule double, but that is the only exception at this time.

(Rule 14.4.4)

A.R. 14-5. The batter seemingly hit a home run as the ball cleared the home run fence after bouncing off of an outfielder without touching the ground. However, the official scorer ruled the play as a double and then awarded the batter-runner home plate with no error assessed. It would seem to be a home run, or a double with a two base error assessed to the outfielder whose body it deflected off of over the home run fence.

RULING: See Rules 14.4.4 and 12.13.5.2 for when it is scored a home run and Rule 12.13.3.5 for when it is scored a double. The official scorer should be contacted and ask for this misapplication of the rule to be corrected. This is a scoring error is correctable even after the game has ended.

(Rule 14.4.4)

FIELDER'S CHOICE

A.R. 14-6. With runners on first and third bases and one out, the batter hits a ground ball into the left center field gap. The runner from third base trots home and the runner from first base misses second base, but touches third and home to score a second run. The batter-runner is thrown out at second base by the left fielder for the second out. The defense appeals the missed base.

RULING: When properly appealed, the runner from first base is declared out for the third out of the inning and, because it was a force out, no runs score. The batter is credited with a fielder's choice, not a hit. If the runner had missed third base (rather than second base) and a proper appeal was made, the runner from third base would score, the base runner who started on first base would be out on a timing play, and the batter would be credited with a single.

(Rules 14.6.1.3, 6.2.4 and 7.1.1.2)

SACRIFICE FLY

A.R. 14-7. With bases loaded, the batter hits a pop up in the infield and the infield fly rule is invoked. Therefore, the batter is out and runners advance at their own risk. The infielders look at each other, allowing the ball to drop without a play. Alertly, the runner at third senses they are going to drop the ball so they score. Does the batter get credit for a run batted in?

RULING: Since the batted fly was not caught, it cannot be a sacrifice fly by definition. Under RBI, sacrifice fly is probably the only reasonable option, but since it (and all the rest) does not apply, there can be no RBI awarded for the run scored. Incidentally, an error should not be charged and the putout goes to the fielder closest to catching the infield fly.

(Rules 14.9 and 14.10)

APPEAL PLAYS

A.R. 14-8. With the bases loaded and two outs, the batter dribbles a ground ball to the pitcher who fumbles the pickup. The runner from third base safely slides home before the pitcher recovers the ball and is able to throw to the plate in time to have the runner who started on second base tagged out at home. Meanwhile, the runner from first base misses second base on their way to arriving to third base and the batter-runner arrives safely at second base. At this time, we have an apparent run scored and three outs, however, the defense properly appeals the missed base which was a force out of the runner who started on first base. Since no run may score when the final out of a half inning is a force out, how is this play scored?

RULING: Because the final out was a force out at second base, the batter reaches first base on a fielder's choice or the pitcher is charged with an error, at the scorer's discretion. In either case, they are left on base. The runner who started on first base is out with credit given to the fielder closest to the appeal play. The runners who began on second and third bases are left on their respective bases. The apparent tag out at the plate is ignored.

(Rule 14.11)

STOLEN BASE

A.R. 14-9. After a base on balls, the batter-runner rounds first base and, noticing the infielders are not defending second base, takes off and safely attains second base. Seeing no fielder, the catcher makes no throw, but instead holds onto the ball after the last pitch.

RULING: Stolen base is charged to the catcher.

(Rule 14.13.9)

A.R. 14-10. After a single to right field, the batter-runner rounds first base and, noticing the infielders are not defending second base, takes off and safely attains second base. Seeing no fielder, the right fielder makes no play but instead walks the ball into the infield.

RULING: Stolen base is charged to the "defensive team."

(Rule 14.13.9)

CAUGHT STEALING

A.R. 14-11. With a runner on third base and one out, the coach calls for a suicide squeeze. The batter misses the pitch on the bunt attempt, the runner from third base leaves on release of the pitch, is caught in a rundown, and eventually putout. Since the first throw by the catcher is to the trailing base, would it be scored a pick-off or since they were trying to advance, would it be caught stealing?

RULING: It would be scored as caught stealing. The general rule is to determine the action of the base runner at the beginning of the play and apply the appropriate scoring. If the base runner would have been credited with a stolen base at the conclusion of a successful play, they would be charged with caught stealing if unsuccessful. If the base

runner was merely leading off with the pitch, their options would be return safely or be picked off. Unlike baseball, the location of the first throw is not relevant to the decision.

(Rule 14.15)

ERROR

A.R. 14-12. Is a catch and carry play scored as an error?

RULING: First, if there are no runners when the batter is put out on the catch, there is no error charged to a fielder who carries the caught ball into dead-ball territory because there is essentially no benefit given to the offense. However, with one or more runners, whether or not to charge an error is subject to the judgment of the scorer. If a ball is easily caught and, with ordinary effort, the fielder could have stayed in live-ball territory (in the judgment of the scorer), charge a single error to the fielder regardless of the number of runners awarded bases on catch and carry. Conversely, in the judgment of the scorer, if the catch was made with extraordinary effort, the fielder could not have completed the catch without going into dead-ball territory or the fielder could not have remained in live-ball territory immediately following the catch, an error should not be charged to the fielder. In general, fielders making extraordinary plays resulting in putouts are not expected to obtain additional outs or prevent runners from advancing so in these cases, the fielder should not be unjustly penalized.

(Rules 14.20 and 14.21)

PITCHING STATISTICS

A.R. 14-13. Because softball is often a game with lead changes allowed by multiple pitchers and starting pitchers have reentry rights, how are the pitchers of record determined other than the obvious situations covered in the rules book?

RULING: The easiest way to determine the pitchers of record is to consider it a new game every time the score is tied, which means any pitcher who has been replaced by another pitcher cannot be the pitcher of record unless they reenter the game. In addition, any pitcher who has been replaced by another pitcher cannot receive the win if their team loses the lead. Having eliminated those pitchers from consideration, apply the principles in Rules 14.30.6 and 14.30.7 to determine the winning and losing pitchers.

(Rule 14.29.6)

Umpires

UMPIRES

A.R. Ump-1. The batter has a 3-1 count and although the next pitch is called a ball, no one acknowledges the base on balls. The next pitch is a foul ball.

- (1) Before the seventh pitch, the offensive coach asks the plate umpire for the count and it is confirmed to be 4-2. Can the umpire correct the count and award the batter first base even though a pitch has been thrown after the mistake?
- (2) Following the foul ball, the seventh pitch is called a strike for strike three. The offensive coach immediately requests the plate umpire award the batter the base on balls they had previously earned, thus negating the strike out.
- (3) On the next pitch, the batter hits an out-of-the-park home run and the defensive coach immediately requests the plate umpire award the batter the base on balls they had previously earned, thus negating the home run?
- (4) During the discussion about the correct count in (1), it is discovered that earlier in the at-bat the batter took a full swing but the plate umpire called the pitch a ball. Can the umpire change one of the balls to a strike and rule the batter out on strikes?

RULING: (1) Yes, as long as the batter has not completed their turn at bat, the umpire may correct the count. In this case, the batter would be awarded first base because the rules say when a batter receives a fourth ball, they are awarded first base without liability to be put out. Similarly, if a batter leaves the batter's box headed for the dugout thinking they struck out (but has not) or heads to first base thinking they walked (but has not), the umpire shall direct them back to the batter's box to complete their turn at-bat. In both (2) and (3), the window of opportunity to correct the count no longer exists because the batter completed their turn at-bat. The result of the play remains the action from the last delivered pitch - strikeout in the first case and home run in the second. Note: Rule 7.3.5 does not apply as this is not a case of a delayed call or a reversed decision putting a player in undue jeopardy. (4) If there is a checked swing or full swing that is not ruled a strike, that must be appealed prior to the next pitch (legal or illegal). Once a pitch has been thrown, the call cannot be changed.

(Rules 4.10.1, 7.3.3 and 11.10)

A.R. Ump-2. Bottom of the seventh inning with the visiting team ahead by one run. With a runner on second base, the batter hits a game-ending home run. The runners complete their base running responsibilities; the umpires return the game balls to the on-site administrator and walk 25 feet to their dressing room. Shortly after their arrival, the visiting coach arrives and asks

the plate umpire if the player who hit the home run had been re-entered and after reviewing the line-up card, the umpire determined they had not. The crew then re-dressed and returned to the field to resume the game based on the unreported reentry. The game eventually went into extra innings with the visiting team winning.

RULING: The umpires' jurisdiction began when they arrived on the field and reported to the on-site administrator or host coach, and it ended when they left the confines of the field after the game. There is no rules book support for resuming the game once their jurisdiction ended. Therefore, the results of the game are a win by the home team. Even though the home coach did not protest the resumption of the game, the events that transpired after the umpire's jurisdiction ended are void.

(Rule 4.10.6)

FITNESS OF THE FIELD

A.R. Ump-3. The first game of a two-day series is halted in the sixth inning due to rain and poor field conditions. It rains all night and the forecast is for rain all day the next day. Since the plate umpire determines if and when play will be resumed, must the plate umpire be on-site and conduct a pregame meeting and then announce play will not resume, or can it be handled in some other way to avoid the umpires and coaches having to travel to the field in order to declare the game regulation and the second game cancelled?

RULING: Rule 5.3.2 does place the responsibility for the decision to resume play on the home plate umpire, however, the rule does not say it must be done on-site nor at the pregame meeting at the rescheduled time. For the sake of credibility, the decision should usually be made on-site with the assistance of the on-site administrator; however, if the team or umpires have to travel significant distance to return to the site for the decision, it can be communicated by phone without gathering in person. The plate umpire should take into consideration field information gained from the on-site administrator as to how well and fast the field recovers and how reliable weather forecasters are in the area. Also keep in mind the on-site administrator works at the institution that is either winning or losing the game and, therefore, may be influenced from their coach as to the reasonableness of resuming play. It would not be inappropriate to ask the on-site administrator to send pictures of the field to the umpire crew and coaches if the decision hinges more on conditions of the field than on the weather forecast to determine if the game will be resumed.

(Rule 5.3.2)

UMPIRE'S JUDGMENT

A.R. Ump-4. With base runners on first and second bases, the batter bloofs a pitch into short center field. The center fielder dives, and as they catch the ball on their shoe tops, the base umpire calls the batter out. Immediately, the center fielder hits the ground, and the ball rolls out of their glove, causing the umpire

to reverse the call, declaring no catch. Both base runners returned to their bases on the out call and are now in undue jeopardy of being out on the force plays.

RULING: The umpire shall award the base(s) as deemed appropriate.

(Rule 7.3.5)

A.R. Ump-5. Bases loaded with no outs and a 3-2 count on the batter when the plate umpire calls the next pitch a ball. The defensive team appeals a checked swing and when all the other runners are moving up on what appears to be a base on balls, the base umpire confirms the swing which results in the batter being declared out. The runners are now all off their bases and the runner from third base is tagged out advancing home.

RULING: Although the batter is out on strikes, the runners are placed back on their original bases and no runners are declared out. The umpires may rectify a situation where the reversal of an umpire decision or a delayed dead ball by an umpire places a batter-runner, a runner or the defensive team in jeopardy. In this case, an award of first base. This does NOT apply when there is a misapplication of a playing rule, but when a reversal or delayed call puts a team in jeopardy, there is relief.

(Rule 7.3.5)

A.R. Ump-6. Bases loaded with no outs and a 3-2 count on the batter when the plate umpire calls the next pitch a ball. The batter-runner advances to first base and all other runners advance one base. Just as the on-deck batter is about to step in the batter's box, the defensive coach has the catcher request help on a checked swing. The base umpire confirms the swing and the batter is called out.

RULING: The base runners remain on their bases because they were not in jeopardy at the time of the reversal or delayed call. If the request for the checked swing had been made in a timely manner, which placed the players in jeopardy, the runners would have been returned to their previous bases. Note: If there had been two outs, the run would not score because the third out was a strikeout.

(Rule 7.3.5)

A.R. Ump-7. With regard to Rule 7.3.5, should the batter-runner be protected under the following circumstances? In the bottom of the eighth inning, with the score tied, one out, and a runner on third base, the batter hits a ground ball to the second baseplayer who fields the ball and throws home. The ball and runner arrive at approximately the same time; the runner uses a wide slide and reaches for home plate with their left hand. On the follow through of the swipe tag attempt, the catcher drops the ball, which slowly rolls away from them onto foul ground beyond the left hand batter's box. The plate umpire delays, rules "no tag" and signals using a safe signal while the ball is still loose on the ground. However, simultaneously, the catcher scrambles for the ball, as the defensive team is calling "tag them." The catcher picks up the ball and as they move to tag the base runner, the runner makes an attempt to return to the plate, but is tagged before they get to the plate and is called out for the second out of the inning. The batter-runner who had initially passed first base, then abandons the base in the general direction of home plate while the play was happening

thinking the game was over based on the umpire's original safe signal. The defense waits for the first baseplayer, who had moved toward home plate when the ball was loose, to return to first base and then throws the ball to them. The batter-runner, attempting to return to first base, is tagged out between home and first base. Is the batter-runner the third out on the tag or are they protected based on the safe signal of the umpire which caused them to leave their base?

RULING: The batter-runner is not protected during this live ball play. It is the offense's responsibility to continue play until the umpire suspends play or ends the game.

(Rule 7.3.5)

A.R. Ump-8. In a game where there is no scoreboard displaying balls and strikes (only runs and outs), there are runners on first and second bases. The batter is in the batter's box when the plate umpire gives a verbal and hand signal of a three ball, two strike count. The next pitch is a ball which causes the batter-runner to run to first base and the runners to advance to the bases they were forced to because of the walk. The catcher makes no attempt to play on the runners. After play ends, the defensive coach questions the count on the batter because only five pitches had been thrown. The umpires confer, it is determined that the correct count is three balls and two strikes after the pitch, and that the plate umpire gave the wrong count. Obviously, the batter had to return to the batter's box to complete their turn-at-bat, but are the runners allowed to stay on the bases they advanced to during the live ball?

RULING: Both teams acted on the misinformation given by the umpire and should neither be advantaged nor disadvantaged. The runners return to the bases held at the time of the last pitch and the batter resumes their at-bat with a full count. Players acting on misinformation given to them by an umpire is not the same as if the offense duped the defense into thinking that they could advance (in which case, play stands).

(Rule 7.3.5)

A.R. Ump-9. A batted ball bounces over the home run fence, but the batter-runner is incorrectly awarded third base. The offensive team substitutes for the runner at third base and immediately thereafter, the mistake is discovered. The base runner is correctly moved back to second base on the ground-rule double. The offensive coach now does not want to make the substitution. Can it be retracted based on the umpire's mistake on the base award?

RULING: The substitution was based on the coach thinking the substitute was going to be on third base, not second base AND that belief was based on information from the umpire (awarding them third base on a ground-rule double). The substitution may be retracted without penalty prior to the first pitch to the next batter.

(Rule 7.3.5)

A.R. Ump-10. With runners on first and second bases, the ball goes by the batter's foot to the backstop. After a brief hesitation, the batter limps to first base as if they had been hit by the pitch. The umpire tries to call them back but in the meantime, the runners each advance and the catcher makes an unsuccessful

play on the lead runner at third base as the trailing runner jogs to second base. Due to the confusion, the umpire kills the play and returns the batter to the batter's box and the runners to first and second bases. The offensive coach claims this is their trick play and the umpires should allow the runners to stay on their advanced bases because the catcher's attempt to put out the lead base runner failed before the umpire stopped play on the trailing runner and limping batter-runner

RULING: Once the umpire kills the play, it cannot be revived even if players do not react to the umpire's "dead ball call" so the runners must return to first and second bases. That said though, ideally immediately after the batter starts to advance, the umpire would indicate play continues and allow the defense to choose to play on the offense which is trying to dupe them. Whether the defense attains outs or the runners advance, the batter is then called back to the batter's box (since they are not entitled to advance) and play resumes. (Rule 7.3.5)

A.R. Ump-11. A line drive deflects off the third baseplayer's glove into foul territory, but the plate umpire was blocked out by the right-handed batter and calls the ball foul. Everyone but the plate umpire saw the batted ball deflect off the third baseplayer's glove and the third base umpire in particular was in a credible position to assist the plate umpire in changing the call. In the interest of "getting the call right," can the umpires confer and change the call?

RULING: No, the foul ball described in this play cannot be revived and made live because the correction does not involve a dead ball award, as it does on an out of the park home run, ground rule double or hit by pitch. That said though, the plate umpire, who is vulnerable to being blocked out, should hesitate in declaring "foul ball" on a ball down the line and use the cues available to get the call right. If the umpire on the third baseline immediately cuts into the middle of the field, the ball is obviously fair whereas if the umpire remains stationary, the ball must have been foul. Cues are also available from the players; although they are less reliable than cues from fellow umpires. When in doubt, signaling a fair ball allows for play to continue and then the umpires can confer and declare the ball foul, if additional information necessitates it. Rule 7.3.5 allows for rectifying a situation when a delayed call or a reversed call puts a player in undue jeopardy, but they do not allow for correcting an umpire's error in judgment. For example, if an umpire calls a pitch a ball but then immediately knows it was over the strike zone, the umpire cannot just correct the call even in the interest of "getting the call right."

(Rule 7.3.5)

A.R. Ump-12. With two outs and runners on first and second bases, the batter grounds the ball to the third baseplayer. The third baseplayer throws to first base in time to beat the batter-runner and the base umpire, positioned behind the shortstop in two man mechanics, emphatically calls them out to apparently end the inning. Because there were two outs at the time of the pitch, the lead runner had sprinted home and, because the first baseplayer knew they were off

the bag, they threw home, although the throw was not in time. The offensive coach immediately asks the base umpire to confer with the plate umpire specifically asking if the baseplayer pulled their foot from the base. The plate umpire confirmed the first baseplayer was indeed off the base and the batter-runner was then declared safe. The defense, believing the inning was over on the initial call, had vacated the field and the runner who started on first base and the batter-runner each abandoned their base in response to the initial call. What is the proper result of the play?

RULING: The result will hinge on the judgment of the umpires because the offensive coach immediately asked for reconsideration of the play at first base before the first pitch to the next batter or the infielders had vacated fair territory. Because the batter-runner who was called out is now safe, the umpire has reversed the call which then allows for the crew to place the runners where they believe they would have been had the original call been correct. Whether the run scores or the lead runner is returned to third base and where to place the runner and batter-runner will be umpire's judgment. If there is doubt, the benefit should go to the offense in this case because either the first baseplayer pulled off the bag in order to attempt to make the play at the plate (which was unsuccessful) or they made the mistake of not being on the base for the force. After placing the runners on base, the inning continues with two outs.

(Rule 7.3.5)

Appendixes

APPENDIX E - LIGHTNING POLICY

A.R. Appendix-1. Can you provide additional guidance on the NCAA Lightning Policy?

RULING: The NCAA Lightning Policy is a guideline. In conjunction with this guideline, schools may consider using additional equipment and information, including but not limited to, lightning detection devices, radars, professional meteorologists and professional forecasts. A local lightning safety plan should be developed and regularly discussed with administrators and officials prior to the start of each competition.

(Appendix E)

APPENDIX F - VIDEO, AUDIO OR MATRIX BOARDS

A.R. Appendix-2. After the umpires return from a video review and render the decision, the scoreboard/video board shows another replay in slow motion. Is this allowed by rule?

RULING: No, this is not allowed by rule. After a decision has been rendered by video review, no additional replays can be shown in slow motion. The crew chief should meet with the game day administrator and ask that the scoreboard/video board crew be made aware of this rule.

(Appendix F)



SRC27

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