



MEMORANDUM

January 14, 2026

VIA EMAIL

TO: Softball Conference Commissioners, Conference Softball Administrators, Directors of Athletics, Senior Woman Administrators at Institutions and Head Softball Coaches.

FROM: Vickie Van Kleeck, secretary-rules editor
NCAA Softball Playing Rules.

SUBJECT: Preseason Softball Playing Rules Reminders for the 2026 Season.

As a new playing season is rapidly approaching, we would like to remind you of a few important items for the 2026 season. The 2026 season will be the first year using the 2026 and 2027 NCAA Softball Rules Book, which can be downloaded as a PDF [here](#).

1. 2026 and 2027 Major Rules Changes. The major rules changes for the 2026 and 2027 season are available on the NCAA softball playing rules [website](#) under Updates and on the [NCAA Softball Home Plate](#) under NCAA Rules Information. **Please note the requirement to use the double base at first base beginning with the 2026 season for Division I and the 2027 season for Divisions II and III.**
2. Updated 2026 and 2027 Case Book. The 2026 and 2027 Softball Case Book contains approved rulings to use as a supplement to the official rules book. The updated case book reflects the most recent rules changes and game situations that better explain the application and adjudication of the official written rules. The online-only case book is available on the NCAA softball playing rules [website](#) under Competition Rules and on the [NCAA Softball Home Plate](#) under Publications.
3. Bat List. The current NCAA Approved Softball Bat List (December 8, 2025) is available on the NCAA softball playing rules [website](#) under NCAA Bat Information and on the [NCAA Softball Home Plate](#) under NCAA Bats. The next planned bat list distribution date is April 13.
4. Barrel Compression Testing. **As a reminder, softball barrel compression testing is required to be conducted at a minimum prior to the start of each tournament, series, doubleheader or game.** This is a requirement for all competitions, including the nonchampionship segment (fall season), preseason tournaments, nonconference games, conference games and postseason.
5. Sideline and Home Run Fences (Rule 2.15.1). By January 1, 2027, sideline and home run fences constructed of wood, concrete or brick shall be padded. Padding must begin not higher than one (1) foot off the ground and extend to the top of the wood, concrete or brick or six (6) feet from the ground, whichever is shorter. For fences constructed of other

materials (e.g., wire fencing and metal posts), institutions should assess the fence surface and determine whether padding would help effectively mitigate potential injury to players who may run, slide or come into contact with the fence surface. This is required by January 1, 2027, and applies to any field hosting NCAA softball competition, including preseason tournaments, nonconference games, conference games and postseason.

6. Registration on the NCAA Softball Home Plate Central Hub. The NCAA Division I Softball Rules Subcommittee and Divisions II and III Softball Rules Committee will continue to utilize the NCAA Softball Home Plate central hub to distribute rules clarifications, announcements, videos and interpretations. Umpiring updates and clarifications also are posted to Home Plate throughout the season.

The Home Plate central hub is available at www.refquest.com. Head coaches should've received an email from RQ+ inviting them to join the Home Plate central hub and create a password. If you did not receive this email or have additional staff/coaches who would like access, please click the NCAA Softball Home Plate central hub link above and register as a coach at no cost.

If you have any questions now or during the season, please contact me at ncaasbsre@gmail.com or 540-819-4655.

Thank you for your attention to this information and good luck this season.

VVK:af

cc: Carol Bruggeman
NCAA Registered Softball Umpires
NCAA Softball Conference Coordinators
NCAA Division I Softball Rules Subcommittee
NCAA Divisions II and III Softball Rules Committee
Selected NCAA Staff Members