



**REPORT OF THE
NCAA SOFTBALL RULES COMMITTEE
JUNE 17-20, 2019, ANNUAL MEETING**

ACTION ITEMS.

1. Legislative items.

- **None.**

2. Nonlegislative items. The NCAA Softball Rules Committee approved the following rules change proposals for the 2020 and 2021 seasons and one experimental rule for the 2020 season. The committee requests approval from the NCAA Playing Rules Oversight Panel (PROP) for the following items:

a. Foul Pole (Rule 2.16.3).

- (1) Recommendation. Prohibit attachments (e.g., screening, flags, pennants, etc.) from being added to the foul side of the pole.
- (2) Effective date. Immediately.
- (3) Rationale. The foul pole may have screening on the fair side of the pole to enhance visibility of a ball leaving the field of play near the foul pole. Attachments to the foul side of the pole present issues for umpires if they are blowing and the ball hits them in flight while leaving the field.
- (4) Estimated budget impact. None.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. None.

b. Undergarments (Rule 3.10.8).

- (1) Recommendation. Require visible undergarments contrast with the color of the ball.
- (2) Effective date. Immediately.
- (3) Rationale. To acknowledge the difficulty in seeing a batted or thrown ball that is coming off a yellow background. This difficulty was recognized with the 2016 rules change that required the bat barrel shell color(s) contrast with the color of the ball and the same consideration should be made for visible undergarment colors.
- (4) Estimated budget impact. Minimal.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. Enhance student-athlete safety.

c. Barrel Compression Testing (Rule 5.2).

- (1) Recommendation. Require softball barrel compression testing (BCT) be conducted according to accepted protocols at a minimum prior to the start of each tournament, series, doubleheader, or single midweek game during the regular season.
- (2) Effective date. January 1, 2021 for all three divisions.
- (3) Rationale. Softball BCT has proven to be an effective tool in protecting the integrity of the game, maintaining the delicate balance of offense and defense, ensuring a player's performance is a result of the player's skill more than of her equipment, regulating the defender's available reaction time, and addressing the concerns regarding bat tampering. Requiring BCT to be conducted prior to play during the regular season will protect the integrity of competition and ensure bats being used remain compliant with established performance standards. NCAA baseball approved this requirement in 2017 for implementation beginning with the 2020 season for DI and 2021 season for DII and DIII.
- (4) Estimated budget impact. \$875 for a barrel compression testing machine. This is not an annual expense.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. None.

d. Use of Equipment to Make Noise (Rules 5.11 and 13.6.2).

- (1) Recommendation. Reclassify the use of equipment to make noise from the "equipment misuse" section of the rules book to the "artificial noisemakers" section of the rules book.
- (2) Effective date. Immediately.
- (3) Rationale. To more appropriately classify the use of equipment to make noise to the "artificial noisemakers" section of the rules book. This includes banging on a bench/bucket with equipment, shoes, hands, banging bats and balls in the dugout, etc.
- (4) Estimated budget impact. None.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. None.

e. Artificial Noisemakers (Rule 5.11 EFFECT).

- (1) Recommendation. Remove the requirement for the opposing coach to bring the illegal use of artificial noisemakers, musical instruments, air horns and electronic amplifiers to the attention of the umpire.
- (2) Effective date. Immediately.
- (3) Rationale. Eliminate the requirement for the opposing coach to bring the illegal use of artificial noisemakers, musical instruments, air horns and electronic amplifiers to the attention of the umpire. Requiring the opposing coach to bring this rule violation to the attention of the umpire creates a potential hostile interaction between coaches and doesn't allow the umpires to take action/enforce the rule on their own.
- (4) Estimated budget impact. None.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. None.

f. Positions of the Offensive Team (Rule 6.5.3 EFFECT).

- (1) Recommendation. Issue a team warning in addition to warning the violator when there is a violation of Rule 6.5.3. The next violation of this rule by anyone on the warned team will result in an ejection of the head coach.
- (2) Effective date. Immediately.
- (3) Rationale. To give umpires recourse once a warning has been issued when there are multiple violations of this rule by different personnel. Currently, the umpires would continue to warn the violator(s) without any penalty for repeat offenses.
- (4) Estimated budget impact. None.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. None.

g. Pitching Position Required for a Legal Pitch (Rules 10.1.1 and 10.2.1).

- (1) Recommendation. The pitcher is considered to be in the pitching position when she has her hands apart, her pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate, both feet on the ground within the 24-inch length of the pitcher's plate, the hips in line with first and third bases, and the catcher is in position to receive the pitch. The stride foot may be on or behind the pitcher's plate as far back as desired. Once the pitcher initially sets the toe of her

stride foot, she may not step back any farther to increase the distance behind the pitcher's plate.

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. To allow the pitcher to begin with her stride (non-pivot) foot behind the pitcher's plate as far back as desired. It is very difficult for an umpire to see if a pitcher's stride foot is actually in contact with the pitcher's plate, and there is no advantage to establishing the stride foot behind the pitcher's plate as long as the pitcher is not allowed to step farther back during the start of the pitch. This change will provide pitchers with greater balance and take into account their variances in sizes and strengths without creating any type of unfair advantage.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

h. Taking the Signal (Rule 10.2.2).

(1) Recommendation. While in the pitching position and taking the signal, the pitcher must take or appear to take a signal. The signal need not come from the catcher.

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. To require the pitcher to take a signal while on the pitcher's plate. Requiring the pitcher to take the signal from the pitcher's plate has two advantages: 1) It will ensure pitchers pause on the plate while receiving the signal, and 2) It will prevent pitchers from "walking through" the pitch. Quick pitching has become an issue because signals are being taken from behind the pitcher's plate and the pitcher is stepping on the pitcher's plate and pitching without pausing.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. Minimal.

i. Runner(s) May Advance With Liability to Be Put Out (Rules 12.2.2, 12.10.8 Note and 12.12.2.1 EFFECT).

(1) Recommendation. Clarify a runner may advance with liability to be put out on a live ball award (base on balls) and prohibit a batter from overrunning first base on a base on balls.

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. The intent of a batter-runner overrunning first base is so that she can slow down her momentum after being called safe at first base. There is no need for a batter who is awarded first base on a base on balls to do this. This eliminates the possibility of the runner overrunning first on a base on balls and then duping the defense by running to second base after she overruns first. She may still round first base toward second base but is then at liability to be put out.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

j. Collisions (Rules 12.13 and 9.5.3 EFFECT).

(1) Recommendation. Require the runner to be declared out when there is a collision between a runner and fielder with or without the ball. If the collision is determined to be flagrant, the runner is also ejected without warning.

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. Deliberate collisions by runners with fielders with or without the ball have no place in NCAA Softball. Fielders need to be protected and runners should avoid colliding with fielders.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. Enhance student-athlete safety.

k. Ejected/Suspended Personnel (Rule 13.13 EFFECT).

(1) Recommendation. If an ejected or suspended student-athlete, coach or other nonplaying personnel violates the conditions of the ejection/suspension and it is discovered during the contest, the game will be forfeited (see Rule 6.20.1.9). If an ejected or suspended student-athlete or other nonplaying personnel violates the conditions of the ejection/suspension and it is discovered once the contest has ended, the suspension (1) for the student-athlete/nonplaying personnel is two games and (2) for the head coach is four games. If an ejected or suspended head coach violates the conditions of the ejection/suspension and it is discovered once the contest has ended, the suspension for the head coach is four games.

- (2) Effective date. Immediately.
- (3) Rationale. To clarify that a forfeit will be the penalty for violations discovered during the contest. Any violation of the conditions of the ejected or suspended personnel rules that is discovered after the contest ends will result in additional game suspensions. Applying additional game suspensions will serve as a deterrent for participating while ejected or suspended.
- (4) Estimated budget impact. None.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. None.

I. Video Review Experimental Rule.

- (1) Recommendation. Allow conferences to experiment with video review during conference games (when two conference teams play each other in a conference game), including the conference tournament, in a limited number of situations. The crew chief may initiate a review of designated plays at his/her discretion beginning with the 6th inning, and each head coach has two challenges to initiate a review for the entirety of the game. Conferences electing to experiment must collect specific data and provide that information to the rules committee for review during its June 2020 annual meeting. See Attachment for more information.
- (2) Effective date. Conference games and conference tournaments during the 2020 season.
- (3) Rationale. In recent years, enhanced technology in multiple sports has led to the implementation of video review to assist with getting the call right. Softball is a sport that has not delved into video review but is a sport that has been a benefactor of increased coverage, fan interest and technological advances. The Southeastern Conference experimented with video review during the 2019 SEC Softball Tournament and provided feedback to the committee. Based on this feedback, the committee updated the components of the experiment, including restricting umpire-initiated reviews until the 6th inning, allowing an additional play to be reviewed, and allowing the review to take place on-site by the crew chief or by an off-field official at a centralized location.
- (4) Estimated budget impact. Cost to install cameras and video review equipment.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. None.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.

- 1. Welcome, introductions and announcements.** The chair welcomed the committee members and guests and thanked them for their time. All attendees introduced themselves and provided a brief overview of their background.
- 2. Review schedule, agenda and committee operations manual.** The committee reviewed the meeting schedule, agenda and the committee operations manual. The committee operations manual included the NCAA conflict of interest policy, guidance for committee members regarding meeting reports, notes and email, voting procedures, principles for rules writing, and experimental playing rules guidelines.
- 3. NCAA Injury Surveillance Program data and report.** The committee reviewed softball injury data provided by the Datalys Center for Sports Injury Research and Prevention.
- 4. Playing Rules Oversight Panel report.** The committee reviewed the report from PROP's annual meeting in January. Topics of interest included a reminder on the PROP directive from 2014 that encouraged committees to strongly consider providing at least a one-year delay before implementing any rules changes with financial or facility implications, the agreement that the respective PROP liaison will attend a portion of the rules committee's annual meeting, receive pertinent correspondence during the year, and participate in the teleconference when the comment period results are reviewed, and a reminder on the memorandum from 2009 that PROP issued to clarify the use of non-profit logos on the game uniform. It was noted that the PROP liaison for softball would be attending a portion of the meeting to hear to the discussion.
- 5. Secretary-rules editor report.** The committee heard a report from the secretary-rules editor, which included a recap of her travel and meetings over the past year and a review of the ejection reports from the 2019 season. It was noted that there were seven instances of physical contact that were either player to player or coach to umpire, which is highly unusual for the sport. Of the six submitted protests, two were valid and upheld.
- 6. National coordinator of umpires report.** The committee heard a report from the national coordinator of umpires, which focused on those rules that are the most difficult for umpires to call. This list included: illegally batted balls, checked swing, illegal pitches, leaving the base early, and hit by pitch vs. foul ball. It was noted that the strike zone is becoming more consistent and plays involving obstruction are getting better. As part of the strike zone conversation, it was noted the illustration in the rules book needs to be updated to reflect a batting stance instead of a hitting stance.
- 7. Active umpire report.** The committee heard a report from the active umpire, which echoed the comments of the national coordinator on difficult rules to call. Additionally, the active umpire noted areas of the rules that the committee should consider updating or simplifying that

would assist the umpires in getting the call right. These were discussed by the committee during the review of the rules proposals and rules book.

- 8. Equipment consultant report.** The rules committee heard a report from the equipment consultant, which included an update on barrel compression testing (BCT) during the season. Seven bats failed during in-season BCT and were sent to the Washington State University lab for further testing. The postseason BCT results are not yet finalized. The committee discussed with the equipment consultant requiring regular season BCT, which baseball has implemented for the 2020 season for Division I and 2021 season for Divisions II and III. The equipment consultant gave the committee information on her discussions with the BCT machine manufacturer on timeline to produce enough machines for all 1,000 institutions, the cost of the softball BCT machine (\$875) and suggested protocol for administering the testing before games. The committee also discussed the ball testing results from 2018 and the number of homeruns hit this season. While the committee initially agreed to only test balls every two years, the committee agreed to move forward with testing balls again this year. The committee also requested that we purchase balls from other manufacturers to test them for comparison purposes.
- 9. National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) report.** The committee heard a report from the NFHS on the three rules changes that are being considered by the NFHS Board of Directors for final approval. Three states have required head/face protection for defensive players, however, the NFHS has not yet mandated this requirement.
- 10. Trends.** The committee reviewed statistical trends from all three divisions and noted that all trends are remaining steady.
- 11. 2019 rules book assignments.** The committee broke into groups to review assigned rules book sections. Those groups reported findings to the full committee as part of the rules proposals and rules survey discussions.
- 12. 2018-19 rules survey results.** The committee reviewed the 2018-19 rules survey in conjunction with the rules proposals discussion.
- 13. Rules proposals and discussion items.** The committee reviewed and considered the 72 rules proposals. The committee approved 11 major rules changes for the 2020 and 2021 softball seasons and one experimental rule, as noted above in the Action Items section. The major rules changes included prohibiting attachments from being added to the foul side of the pole, requiring visible undergarments contrast with the color of the ball, requiring barrel compression testing during the regular season beginning January 1, 2021, updating the pitching rules to standardize the process for taking a signal and allow pitchers with greater balance and take into account variances in sizes and strengths without creating any type of unfair advantage, enhancing the penalties on runners for deliberate collisions with fielders with or without the

ball, and clarifying a forfeit will be the penalty for ejected/suspended personnel violations discovered during the contest and any violations discovered after the contest ends will result in additional game suspensions. The experimental rule request is a follow-up from the video review experiment approved for the Southeastern Conference during its 2019 Softball Tournament.

14. 2019 Softball Case Book. The committee agreed to review assigned case book sections after the annual meeting and discuss on its Aug. 21 teleconference.

15. Future dates. The committee agreed to conduct the rules comment period July 1-12 and a teleconference Thursday, July 18, to discuss the results. The committee scheduled its 2020 annual meeting for June 15-17 in Indianapolis and will conduct teleconferences the second Wednesday of each month at noon Eastern time. The committee agreed to adjust the call for proposals and survey timelines during the 2019-20 and 2020-21 academic years to allow for better discussion at the annual coaches convention in December.

16. Selection of chair. The committee elected Lexie Vernon, Knox College, as chair for the 2019-20 academic year.

17. Other business. The committee had no other business.

18. Adjournment. The committee adjourned Thursday, June 20, at 11 a.m. Eastern time.

Committee Chair: Edith Gallagher, Mansfield University of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference

Staff Liaison: Ashlee Follis, Championships and Alliances

NCAA Softball Rules Committee June 17-20, 2019, Annual Meeting	
Attendees:	
Todd Buckingham, Saginaw Valley State University.	
David Deiros, Florida Gulf Coast University.	
Edith Gallagher, Mansfield University of Pennsylvania.	
Kelly Gatwood, Conference USA.	
Rachel Lawson, University of Kentucky.	
Elizabeth Luckie, Sacred Heart University.	
Deanna Tritinger, Chatham University.	
Vickie Van Kleeck, secretary-rules editor.	
Lexie Vernon, Knox College.	
Absentees:	
None.	

Guests in Attendance:
Dee Abrahamson, equipment consultant.
Bobby DeMayo, active umpire.
Craig Hyde, national coordinator of umpires.
Ronda Seagraves, Concordia University Texas.
Sandy Searcy, National Federation of State High School Associations.
NCAA Staff Liaison in Attendance:
Ashlee Follis.
Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:
Dan Calandro, Sharon Cessna and Greg Johnson.

Attachment – 2020 Experimental Rule

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

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

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

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

Data Collection

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

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