



REPORT OF THE
NCAA SOFTBALL RULES COMMITTEE
JUNE 16-18, 2025, MEETING

ACTION ITEMS.

1. Legislative items.

- None.

2. Nonlegislative items. The NCAA Softball Rules Committee approved the following rules change proposals for the 2026 and 2027 seasons. The committee requests approval from the NCAA Playing Rules Oversight Panel (PROP) for the following items:

a. Bases – First Base (Rule 2.7).

- (1) Recommendation. To require the use of the double base at first base beginning with the 2026 season for Division I and the 2027 season for Divisions II and III. It shall be a one- or two-piece unit, 15 inches by 30 inches, and manufactured to be of equal height between 1½ to 3½ inches thick. The fair portion shall be white and the foul portion shall be a contrasting color (e.g., orange).
- (2) Effective date. 2026 for Division I and 2027 for Divisions II and III.
- (3) Rationale. To provide equal opportunity for both the offensive and defensive players to function in the same approximate area, potentially limit contact at first base between offensive and defensive players and emphasize batter-runners are to use the runner's lane.
- (4) Estimated budget impact. Two single bases may be used. Approximately \$250 for the double base, however, installation costs vary depending on the type of field (e.g., may be higher for a turf field).
- (5) Student-athlete impact. The use of a double base at first base may limit contact and better protect the runner and fielder since the defense is primarily restricted to using the white (fair) portion and the batter-runner is primarily restricted to the colored (foul) portion.

b. Signal Arm Band (Rule 3.10.8).

- (1) Recommendation. To allow players to wear their signal arm band/device on their arm, belt, in their pocket, etc. Note: Pitchers may not wear it on their pitching arm.
- (2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. To allow players the latitude to wear signal arm bands/devices in whatever manner they choose.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

c. Electronic Equipment (Rule 5.9.9).

(1) Recommendation. To amend the use of one-way communication (digital signal) devices to be used on offense as well as defense and allow signals to be transmitted from the dugout or coaches' boxes on the field. In-ear/hat/helmet audio communication devices remain limited to catchers while on defense.

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. To improve the pace and flow of the game and to maintain the integrity of a team's signals.

(4) Estimated budget impact. Permissive rule. If an institution chooses to use a one-way communication device(s), the cost will vary depending on the type of device (approximately \$50 to more than \$2,000).

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

d. Video Review – Challenges (Rule 5.9.10 and Appendix G).

(1) Recommendation. To allow coaches to retain their video review challenge if ruling is changed.

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. To follow the procedure used in other collegiate sports. Coaches may have a challenge to use later in the game when it is most needed. The ultimate goal is to get the call right and this aids in that effort.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

e. Video Review – Plays Subject to Review (Rule 5.9.10 and Appendix G).

(1) Recommendation. To revise video review to include:

- Illegally batted balls if not called on the field. ***This portion of the rule was subsequently rescinded by the Softball Rules Committee during its July 29, 2025, videoconference.**
- Batter-runner, after overrunning first base, feints or makes an attempt to go to second base.
- Runner passes another runner.
- Interference is reviewable if it is NOT called on the field. Exception (reviewable at all times): spectator or batter interference.
- Catch or no catch: in the infield call of “no catch” can be changed to “catch” only if it results in the third out with any runners on base, or any time with a batter-runner only. A called “catch” on a fair ball in the infield is not reviewable at any time. For the purpose of video review, a fly ball is considered in the infield when it is not beyond the nearest infielder.
- Umpires may utilize video review for record keeping items such as the count, what player was at bat, substitutions, etc.

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. To provide clarity on reviewable plays and ensure video review is assisting in getting the call right.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

f. Video Review – Criteria (Rule 5.9.10 and Appendix G).

(1) Recommendation. To allow teams to congregate during a video review and talk with teammates/coaches/team personnel without being charged with a conference. Teams must be ready to play when the umpires return from the review.

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. To follow the procedure used in other collegiate sports to congregate and confer with teammates/coaches/team personnel during the video review. Players must remain on the field.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

g. Protests (Rule 7.2).

(1) Recommendation. To require all protests to be resolved during the game. Games could no longer be played “under protest” to be resolved by the Secretary-Rules Editor.

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. The final results of a game are best decided during the game, not at a later date. To eliminate the potential to replay a game from the point of interruption, alleviating additional travel costs, missed classes and administrative coordination.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

h. Reentry (Rule 8.6).

(1) Recommendation. To expand the current concussion reentry rules to include any medical condition with the potential to cause catastrophic injury or illness (including, but not limited to, diabetes, sickle cell trait, asthma, etc.), as determined by a primary athletics health care provider.

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. NCAA Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports Prevention and Performance Subcommittee noted that in sports with playing rules that limit substitutions and/or reentry during competition, student-athletes may be disincentivized from seeking medical evaluation or treatment if doing so could render them ineligible to return to participation. CSMAS Prevention and Performance Subcommittee recommended amending playing rules that limit substitutions and/or reentry to allow exceptions for a student-athlete seeking timely medical evaluation and/or treatment of any condition with the potential to cause catastrophic injury or illness and, consistent with independent medical care legislation, to eliminate any rule

that may impede the unchallengeable autonomous authority of primary athletics health care providers to determine medical management and return-to-play decisions related to student-athletes.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

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

i. Obstruction (Rule 9.5.2).

(1) Recommendation. The defensive player is not considered obstructing if they are in possession of the ball or if the movement or position of the defensive player did not impede or alter the base runner's path to a base or home plate.

Delete current Note 3 and replace with:

Blocking the leading edge of the base constitutes obstruction unless the runner's ability to reach the base is not hindered. If the base runner would have been out, regardless of the defensive player's movement or positioning, which had no effect on the play, the runner would remain out and the obstruction would be ignored.

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. To clarify obstruction and not penalize a defensive player's movement or positioning if the base runner's path was not impeded or altered or the runner would have been out.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

j. Time Allowed Between Pitches (Rule 10.18).

(1) Recommendation. To require the batter to be in the batter's box and the catcher in the catcher's box within 12 seconds after the pitcher receives the ball in preparation for the pitch or after the umpire calls, "Play ball" (i.e., 8 seconds remaining).

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. Currently, the batter and catcher must be ready within 10 seconds. This will afford the batter ample time to receive the signal and be positioned in the batter's box ready to hit.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

k. Legal Position in the Batter's Box (Rule 11.2.5 and Appendix B). *This rule was subsequently rescinded by the Softball Rules Committee during its July 29, 2025, videoconference.

(1) Recommendation. To prohibit the batter, at the moment of bat-ball contact, to have their entire foot on the ground completely outside the lines of the batter's box or any part of the foot touching home plate. This violation will result in an immediate dead ball and batter being ruled out whether the ball is fair or foul.

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. To ensure all lines on the softball field to be adjudicated by the same standards and acknowledge the difficulty for umpires to consistently see a part of the foot or body over the lines to charge a batter with an illegally batted ball.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

l. Scoreboards and Video (Appendix F).

(1) Recommendation. To allow an unlimited number of replays on the in-venue scoreboard/videoboard, at any speed, while a play is under video review by the umpires. Once a decision has been made by the umpires and/or review officials, no further replays shall be shown. The scoreboard/videoboard may not show any feed or footage of the play that was not available to the umpires and/or video review officials. On plays that are not under video review, the current policy of allowing one replay at full speed applies.

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. Currently, any instance in which an umpire has made a judgement call may be replayed only one time at regular speed even once a play is under video review. This rules change is consistent with NCAA baseball and would allow institutions to manage

both baseball and softball scoreboard/videoboard operations in a consistent manner. Additionally, the in-venue audience will have the opportunity to experience the same feeds and footage provided to broadcast for television and streaming audiences. This was an experimental rule during the 2025 season.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.

1. **Welcome and announcements.** Tina Phillips, chair of the Softball Rules Committee, welcomed the committee and invited guests and thanked them for their time.
2. **Review schedule, agenda, committee operations manual and Playing Rules Oversight Panel directive.** The rules committee previously reviewed the meeting schedule, agenda, operations manual and PROP directive during its June 10 videoconference.
3. **Approval of the June 10 videoconference report.** The report was approved as written.
4. **Playing Rules Oversight Panel report and new directive.** Lexie Vernon, PROP liaison to the Softball Rules Committee, reviewed PROP's January 22 annual meeting report, noting the discussion on commercial logos on uniforms and playing surfaces and presented the PROP directive from 2025. This directive recommends a penalty be established and incorporated into the rules to address illegal participation by suspended players and coaches. It was noted the softball rules already include this type of penalty.
5. **Secretary-rules editor report.** The secretary-rules editor reviewed their travel and meetings over the past year and the 190 incident reports from the 2025 season. It was noted this was lower than the previous season.
6. **National coordinator of umpires report.** The national coordinator of umpires reviewed Home Plate registration numbers, which increased by 11.5%, the new evaluations process, which was very successful, and areas of progress and concern.
7. **Active umpire report.** The active umpire focused on necessary rules book corrections and edits.
8. **Director of training and video review report.** The director of training and video review outlined the increase in video review data submitted for the 2025 regular season, which was submitted by the crew chief rather than event staff and reviewed 2025 postseason video review data and highlights and areas of concern from the 2025 season. Safe/out continues to be the most reviewed play type followed by leaving early and obstruction. The rules committee

approved an editorial recommendation to use confirmed, stands, or changed when communicating the video review decision. This will provide clarity as to the outcome of the video review.

9. **Equipment consultant report.** The equipment consultant reviewed the 2025 barrel compression testing failures by bat manufacturer and bat damage incident reports filed by umpires. It was noted there continues to be preseason tournaments that fail to bat test and potential changes to the USA Softball certification process may be coming.
10. **Trends and length of game data.** The rules committee reviewed statistical trends from all three divisions and game duration information from regular season and postseason. All trends were relatively flat, with scoring up slightly in all three divisions and regular season game durations consistent with 2024. DI postseason game duration was up slightly, DII was consistent with 2024 and DIII postseason decreased in time.
11. **NCAA Injury Surveillance Program report.** The rules committee heard a report on softball injury data from the Datalys Center for Sports Injury Research and Prevention.
12. **National Federation of State High School Associations report.** The rules committee heard a report from the NFHS, which included the three potential rules changes for next season, which will be reviewed by rules review soon.
13. **Review 2024 and 2025 rules surveys results.** The rules committee reviewed the 2024 and 2025 rules surveys results in conjunction with discussion on the corresponding rules change proposals. It was noted that the response rate for head coaches was very low (36% and 27%, respectively).
14. **Review 2026/2027 rules proposals and committees' feedback.** The rules committee reviewed and considered 52 rules proposals and recommended 12 major rules changes for the 2026 and 2027 softball seasons, as noted above in the Action Items section of this report.
15. **Review 2024/2025 Softball Case Book.** The rules committee reviewed and approved all approved rulings in the case book.
16. **Future videoconference schedule.** The next videoconference is scheduled for noon Eastern time Tuesday, July 29, to review the comment period results.
17. **Other business.** Proposals regarding the new Division I governance structure were discussed.
18. **Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 11 a.m. Eastern time Wednesday, June 18.

Committee Chair: Tina Phillips, University of Pittsburgh, Bradford, Allegheny Mountain Collegiate Conference
Staff Liaison(s): Ashlee Follis, Championships and Alliances, Playing Rules and Officiating

NCAA Softball Rules Committee June 16-18, 2025, Meeting	
Attendees:	
Kelsey Christensen, Providence College.	
Becky Clark, University of South Alabama.	
Marie Curran-Headley, State University of New York at Cobleskill.	
Felicia Johnson, Virginia State University.	
Tina Phillips, University of Pittsburgh, Bradford.	
Vickie Van Kleeck, secretary-rules editor.	
Tim Walton, University of Florida.	
Betsy Wilcox, Southeast Missouri State University.	
Joe Yegge, Montana State University Billings.	
Absentees:	
None.	
Guests in Attendance:	
Dee Abrahamson, equipment consultant.	
Kody Campbell, Datalys Center for Sports Injury Research and Prevention.	
Avinash Chandran, Datalys Center for Sports Injury Research and Prevention.	
Robbie Guest, active umpire.	
Cody Little, director of training and video review.	
Steve McCown, national coordinator of umpires.	
Sandy Searcy, National Federation of State High School Associations.	
Lexie Vernon, Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference.	
NCAA Staff Liaison in Attendance:	
Ashlee Follis.	
Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:	
LaGwyn Durden, Greg Johnson and Mallory Mickus.	