



2020 and 2021 Major Rules Changes for Softball

The following rules changes were approved by the NCAA Softball Rules Committee and the Playing Rules Oversight Panel. They will be incorporated into the rules book for the 2020 and 2021 seasons.

<u>Rule</u>	<u>Rule Change and Rationale</u>
2.16.3	<p>Prohibit attachments (e.g., screening, flags, pennants, etc.) from being added to the foul side of the pole.</p> <p>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.</p>
3.10.8	<p>Require visible undergarments contrast with the color of the ball.</p> <p>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.</p>
5.2	<p>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. Implementation – January 1, 2021 for Division I and January 1, 2022 for Divisions II and III. Note – This requires institutions to purchase a BCT machine, which costs \$875. This is not an annual expense.</p> <p>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.</p>
5.11 and 13.6.2	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>

<p>5.11 EFFECT</p>	<p>The use of artificial noisemakers, musical instruments, air horns and electronic amplifiers by student-athletes and team personnel is prohibited in team areas. EFFECT – When brought to the attention of the umpire by the opposing coach, The umpire shall issue a team warning...</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>6.5.3 EFFECT</p>	<p>The offensive team must keep all personnel, except the base coaches, batter, base-runner(s) and on-deck batter, in the dugout, bullpen or dead-ball area while the ball is live. EFFECT – The umpire shall warn the violator <u>and issue a team warning</u>. If the violator does not immediately comply, the umpire should eject him or her. <u>The next violation of this rule by anyone on the warned team will result in an ejection of the head coach.</u></p> <p>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.</p>
<p>10.1.1 and 10.2.1</p>	<p>10.1.1 – The pitcher is considered to be in the pitching position when she has her hands apart, <u>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,</u> she steps forward, puts both feet on the pitcher's plate, and the catcher is in position to receive the pitch.</p> <p>10.2.1.1 – Both feet must be on the ground in contact with the pitcher's plate. Any part of each foot in contact with the ground or pitcher's plate must be completely within the 24-inch length of the pitcher's plate. <u>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.</u></p> <p>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</p>

	and take into account their variances in sizes and strengths without creating any type of unfair advantage.
10.2.2	<p>While in the pitching position and taking the signal, the pitcher shall pause for a noticeable stop of at least two seconds to must take or simulate taking appear to take a signal. The signal need not come from the catcher. <i>Note: The rule does not preclude the pitcher from taking an earlier signal from someone who indicates the desired pitch and/or location nor the pitcher from referring to an arm band prior to complying with Rule 10.2.2.</i></p> <p>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.</p>
13.13 EFFECT	<p>EFFECT – 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). <u>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.</u></p> <p>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.</p>
Experimental Rule	<p>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.</p> <p>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</p>

	<p>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.</p>
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