

2013 NCAA RULES AND MECHANICS

Brief Summary of Differences

This document outlines some of the most common situations an NCAA umpire should know before working any level of NCAA softball, but is geared for umpires looking to begin or improve umpiring at the Community College Level. It is a BRIEF SUMMARY and is not intended as a comprehensive listing of the rules and mechanics differences between NCAA and other organizations.

RULES

Strike Zone – the area above home plate between the bottom of the batter’s sternum and the top of her knees when she assumes her natural batting stance. When the top of the ball is on or within the horizontal plane and either side of the ball is on or within the vertical plane of the strike zone, a strike is called unless the ball touches the ground before reaching home plate.

Courtesy Runners – There ARE NO COURTESY RUNNERS. Coaches can substitute for any player, but this is considered a SUBSTITUTION and follows that rule.

Re-Entry – A STARTER can be substituted for and re-entered ONE TIME. A SUBSTITUTE cannot re-enter the game.

Playing Shorthanded – Teams CANNOT PLAY WITH LESS THAN 9. Even for injury. Even if both coaches agree.

Conferences – one defensive conference PER INNING, second defensive conference during an inning results in an ejection of the offending participant

Hit By Pitch – If a batter is hit by a pitch that is in the batter’s box, she is awarded first base – SHE DOES NOT HAVE TO MAKE AN EFFORT TO GET OUT OF THE WAY. If the batter intentionally TRYS TO GET HIT then the pitch is called a ball or strike and she stays in the batter’s box. If it is strike three she is out, if ball four, the umpire says, “Ball Four” and awards her first base on the ball four count, not the hit by pitch.

Leaving Early – DELAYED DEAD BALL – Wait until playing action finishes then defensive coach has the option to take result of the play or enforce the leaving early penalty (“no pitch” and the runner who left early is out).

Obstruction – About to Receive – if the fielder is “about to receive” the ball they are NOT called for obstruction on a runner. About to receive is measured by “in the process of catching the ball” not just waiting for it to get there. It also applies if the ball is between the runner and the fielder who is receiving the throw or if the ball is closer to the fielder than the runner.

RULES (Continued)

Obstruction – Rounding/Returning – Anytime a fielder obstructs a runner rounding or returning to a base, that fielder receives a formal “warning.” On the second obstruction call on the same fielder for rounding and returning, the runner is awarded the next base.

Warnings – Formal warnings are issued for arguing balls and strikes and rounding/returning obstruction. There are penalties for second offensives after warnings. Including ejections. Learn them.

Time Between Pitches – Pitcher and batter must be ready 10 seconds after the pitcher has the ball, then the pitcher has 10 seconds to bring the hands together. Then the pitcher has not more than 5 seconds to deliver the pitch.

Look Back Rule – The batter-runner, after reaching first base, can walk back towards it without touching then decide to go to second base. Umpires must stay in position, alert for what the batter-runner will do. Don’t move until the batter-runner touches first base or breaks for second.

MECHANICS

Checking Bats – You must check the bats of each team before every game. DO NOT SKIP THIS. Each team must provide a PRINTED list of the Approved bat list with the bats they use highlighted. The plate umpire holds the list, the base umpire looks at each bat, checks for dents, rattles, and wobbles, and reads the MODEL NUMBER to the plate umpire who initials that bat on the printed list. DO THIS FOR EACH BAT, EACH TEAM, EACH GAME!

Dropped 3rd Strike – When the catcher fails to catch a 3rd strike with first base open or any time there are two outs the plate umpire will make the “strike” call and signal and then immediately make the “safe” signal. The base umpire will make the “ball not caught” signal by pointing the index finger to the ground. The base umpire WILL NOT MAKE THE “BALL IS CAUGHT” signal at any time in this situation.

2 Out Signal – EVERYTIME there are two outs ALL UMPIRES WILL MAKE THE “TWO OUT” signal by holding two fingers on the opposite wrist or forearm.

Checked Swing – EVERYTIME a catcher asks you to “go for help” on a checked swing, ask your partner for help. This is a RULE.