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MEMORANDUM

February 28, 2007

TO: NCAA Head Baseball Coaches and Coordinators of Umpires.

FROM: Jim Paronto, secretary-rules editor
NCAA Baseball Rules Committee.

SUBJECT: Interpretations Bulletin.

Included with this mailing are interpretations and guidance that grew from the pre-season clinics. Please review this as you start the season.

If you have any questions about these or any baseball rules, please let me know (Paronto25@aol.com).

JP/TYH:nb

Enclosure

cc: Baseball Rules Committee
Mr. Dave Yeast

National Collegiate Athletic Association

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NCAA Baseball Rules Interpretations/Guidance
February 2007

Force-Play Slide Rule.

The changes made by the rules committee in this rule are not intended to diminish the safety aspect of this rule in any way. To the contrary, the changes are intended to allow runners to stop more safely and to eliminate fielders creating intentional contact to draw a double play call under this rule.

GUIDANCE 1: The fielder should still be given the benefit of the doubt when making this call. If the runner slides away from the base and at the fielder, the runner is still subject to this rule. Runners that legally slide directly into the base should not be penalized unless some additional action occurs (e.g., flagrant contact). When adjudicating this rule, umpires are instructed to consider why a call must be made. Which player is forcing the issue? Is the fielder in the baseline, drawing contact? Or, is the runner sliding away from the base, affecting the fielder's play? The player that is forcing the issue does not deserve the benefit of the doubt with this rule.

SITUATION 1: Runner on first, one out. Ground ball comes to the second baseman, and he flips the ball to the shortstop covering second. R1 slides to the right field side of the base. The shortstop takes the throw, avoids R1 by moving farther toward right field and completes the double play, retiring the batter-runner at first base.

RULING: This is force-play-slide rule interference. The fact that the double play was completed has no bearing on what occurred at second base. The runner altered the play of the shortstop by making him move to avoid contact. Had the runner slid directly to the base, no interference would be called.

SITUATION 2: Same as Situation 1, but R1 slides to the left field side of the base. The shortstop takes the throw and completes the double play, retiring the batter-runner at first base.

RULING: This is not interference. R1's slide outside of the baseline had no bearing on the fielder and did not affect the play. In fact, R1 may have been sliding toward the infield to avoid contact with the shortstop.

GUIDANCE 2: It is a good idea to clean up these illegal slides early in a game. The fact that the double play was completed should just underscore the call and make it clear to players on both sides that interference will not be tolerated.

GUIDANCE 3: The rule was changed this year to add the caveat that for force-play-slide rule to occur, the play in question must include an illegal slide by the runner **and** alter the play. One question that came up at the NCAA pre-season clinics with umpires was: "How much does it need to alter the play?" The answer is simple: not much. Any

alteration of the play, regardless of how subtle, would result in interference when the runner has slid wide toward the fielder. The umpire at the base where this call must be made must make a judgment. In the situations above, it is hard to tell what might happen with a fielder trying to avoid contact from the base runner. It is best to err on the side of the runner altering the play when not sliding legally.

The bottom line is that the committee altered this rule to give base runners a few more options for stopping themselves, not to create collisions and hard slides at second base. Umpires that had a good handle on this rule in the past should maintain that standard, but allow runners to slide over and past the base and to use pop-up slides. Those are the only real alterations made by the committee.

Dropped Third Strike – When the Runner is Retired.

SITUATION: Bases empty. BR strikes out swinging, but the catcher drops the ball. The batter does not make an attempt to run to first base and leaves the dirt circle.

RULING: If a batter, once off the dirt circle after a dropped third strike, acts in any manner inconsistent with his right to advance to first base, he shall be declared out.

Offensive Team Players In Live-Ball Territory.

SITUATION 1: Game tied at 2, top of the 9th. Runner on second. BR hits a line drive single to center field. R2 is safe at the plate. The throw from center field gets past the catcher. The batting team's dugout has emptied to congratulate R2. When the ball gets away, it touches one of the players from the dugout.

RULING: The batting team members are out of the dugout illegally. Penalize by calling the interference, the ball becomes dead immediately, and hand out the appropriate penalties. Once playing action has ceased and the proper penalties have been administered, issue a team warning about being out of the dugout.

SITUATION 2: Same scenario as in Situation 1, but none of R2's teammates are out of the dugout. The ball gets away from the catcher, but hits the on-deck batter, who was near home plate directing R2 to slide.

RULING: The ball remains live. While this is not specified in the rules book, the on-deck hitter is doing his job. As long as he doesn't intentionally interfere with the ball once it gets past the catcher, the ball shall remain live.

Pitcher Intentionally Throwing at Batter.

SITUATION: The pitcher intentionally throws at a hitter and the Umpire in Chief immediately ejects the pitcher. As the pitcher is leaving the mound area, he charges toward the batter and punches him.

RULING: Although the player has already been ejected for intentionally throwing at a batter (a four game suspension) his act of punching the batter still carries its own penalty of three games as part of the fight rule. This player will now serve a seven game suspension.