

Major Rules Changes

Rule 1-14-f, Jackets. The committee voted to: "...allow a jacket, which includes the team's official logo, in the coaching boxes if it is consistent with the team's uniform color and apparel. If both coaches opt to wear a jacket, the jackets must be uniform."

Rationale: The committee would like coaches to wear the official game jersey as the first preference. However, the committee understands that some coaches prefer to wear a jacket over the jersey and this alteration allows that, but places some restrictions on the type and requires that a team logo be on the apparel.

Rule 1-16-c, Eligible Players. Add to this rule: "During a game, no one except *eligible* players in uniform...shall occupy a team's dugout or **bullpen**."

Rationale: This alteration makes the rules book consistent with what has been a championship policy – and generally accepted practice – for years.

Rule 2, Ejections. The committee adjusted the penalty for pitchers that receive a post-game ejection. It will read: "If a pitcher receives a post-game ejection for unsportsmanlike actions, the pitcher will receive a four game suspension."

Rationale: This consistently punishes pitchers who commit an act worthy of an ejection after the game is completed. This rule only applies to post-game ejections.

Rule 4-1-a, Bat and Helmet Checks. The committee decided to take this duty out of the hands of the umpires. Coaches will be asked to certify that all bats and helmets are legal during the pregame meeting.

Rational: The committee's reasoning is two-fold. First, the committee does not believe having umpires enter both dugouts to check bats and helmets for legality starts the relationship in the right way between coaches and umpires. Secondly, since all NCAA bats are certified, very few bats are deemed illegal. Additionally, teams do not always make all bats and helmets available to umpires during pre-game activities. Coaches currently have the right to challenge a bat as illegal and they continue to have this right.

Rule 4-4-a, Pre-game Meeting. "The head coach, during the first game of a weekend series or any non-conference game, must attend the pre-game plate conference."

Rationale: To ensure the umpires are aware who the head coach is before a series and/or nonconference contest.

Rule 7-2, 7-2-c-(1), 7-2-(2)-a-b, Designated Hitter. The committee made several revisions to this rule:

Revise 7-2-c-(1) to read: "If the DH is not the pitcher and the DH or the pitcher is moved to a defensive position, this move may be made anytime."

*Revise 7-2-(2)-(a) to read: "Upon his removal from the pitching position, he may be **immediately** inserted as the DH; the pitcher may not reenter the game in any other capacity."*

Add A.R.: "At any time, before the pitcher's removal as the game pitcher, he may pinch run or pinch hit for only the DH and become the DH."

In 7-2-c-(2)-(b): Delete "while on defense." Insert, "At any time, 1) be moved..."

*Highlight the last sentence of 7-2-c-(2)-(b): "**There is no loss of the DH but the player may not reenter the contest in any other capacity.**"*

Revise 7-2-(5)-(b) to read: "The DH may be moved to a defensive position at any time."

Rule 8-2-d-(2)-A.R., Hit By Pitch. Delete the wording: “makes no attempt to avoid the pitch” in this approved ruling.

Rationale: This eliminates a contradiction in the ruling in comparison with the actual rule. The committee did not alter any other wording in this section. The committee is emphasizing, through umpire instruction that the batter must attempt to avoid the pitch to be awarded first base.

Rule 8-3-g-(1)-(2), Ball In/Out of Play. Add to this section: “(3) The call is a delayed dead ball. Any attempt to advance beyond those that would be awarded is at the runner’s own risk.”

Rationale: Provides for clearer understanding of this rule.

Rule 8-6-b-(3), Appeals. Revise the second sentence to read: “In the case of multiple appeals, if the defense errs during its first appeal attempt or any base runner advances, the defense loses its right to appeal any runner at any base.”

Rationale: Clarifies what has been the standard practice in both the NCAA & Major League Baseball codes.

Rule 9-1-a-(1)-(c); 9-1-e; 9-1-e, A.R., Pitching. Alter this rule to add the phrase, “and placing the pivot foot on the ground behind the rubber” (appropriate to context below).

9-1-a-(1)-(c): “Disengage from the pitching rubber by stepping back off the rubber and placing the pivot foot on the ground behind the rubber before separating the hands (or stepping back with the free foot).”*9-1-e:* “The pitcher, upon breaking contact with the pitcher’s rubber by stepping backward and placing the pivot foot on the ground behind the rubber becomes an infielder...”

9-1-e, A.R.: “To ‘step off’ the pitcher’s rubber, the pitcher must 1) step backward and place the pivot foot on the ground behind the rubber and 2)...”

Rationale: Clarifies when the pitching restrictions end (when the pivot foot makes contact with the ground behind the rubber).

Rule 9-4-d, Pitching Changes. Revise to read: “A trip to the mound, which may include a conference with the infielders, is concluded when a coach leaves the dirt circle or the pitcher begins his eight warm-up pitches.”

Rationale: The committee believes this will give umpires better guidance to improve the pace of the game without limiting the coaching opportunities.

Approved Rulings

Rule 1-16-b, Dugouts. The committee added three rulings to clarify those dugouts that may be extended to read:

A.R. 1: No extensions to dugouts will be allowed on the home plate side of either dugout.

A.R. 2: No extra on deck hitters may swing bats in any extension.

A.R. 3 Any dead-ball area on the home plate side of any dugout that is used for ball persons is not to be used by any uniformed player.”

Rationale: Clarification of what is allowed.

Rule 2, Interference. The committee voted to add an approved ruling to read: “

A.R. 5: If a fielder chases after a deflected batted ball ahead of a runner’s arrival and is in the act of picking up the ball (fielding) when contact is made by an offensive player, interference is the call. If the fielder is chasing after the deflected batted ball and contact is made between the two players, obstruction should be the call.

Rationale: Will serve for better clarification for umpires in the administration of interference/obstruction. This question has been asked numerous times of the secretary-editor in recent seasons as well.

Rule 3-6-h, Ejections. Remove the words: “checked swing” from this rule and add a new approved ruling to read:

A.R. 2: If a coach or manager leaves the dugout or their position to argue a checked swing, they shall be ejected without warning.

Rationale: A checked swing is a ball or a strike and must be penalized in this manner.

Rule 5-2-c, Pitching Changes. Add an approved ruling to read:

A.R.: During a pitching change, umpires are instructed to pay particular attention to enforcing the provisions of 5-2-c.

Rationale: Teams must be kept in the dugout area during pitching changes to keep the game moving and limit bench jockeying, etc.

Rule 5-5-b, Halted Game. Add the following approved rulings: “A.R 2: A substitute becomes a player when he has been reported to the UIC and the new player is written into the UIC’s lineup card.

A.R. 3: If a pitcher is brought into the game but has not faced one batter (or retired the side) when the game is stopped for weather, such pitcher may, but is not required, to continue pitching when the game is resumed.

A.R. 4: No player removed for a substitute prior to the suspension of play may return to the lineup when the game is resumed.

Rationale: Provides clearer understanding of these situations that may occur in a halted game.

Rule 8-3-o-(4), Ball In/Out of Play. Add new approved ruling to read:

A.R.: If the ball has stopped rolling or it is clear that the ball will not roll into dead ball territory and a new impetus is applied to the ball by a defensive player, the awards are two bases from the time of the act.

Rationale: Provides for clearer interpretation.

Rule 8-7-a-(3)-A.R. 2, Interference. Revised to read:

If the flagrant or malicious contact by the runner was before the runner's touching the plate, the runner shall be declared out and also ejected from the contest. The ball shall be declared dead immediately. All other base runners shall return to the bases they occupied at the time of the pitch. If the contact was after the runner had touched home plate, the runner will be ruled safe, the ball becomes dead immediately and all other base runners will return to the base they had last touched prior to the contact.

Rationale: Clarification and better administration.

Rule 9-2-d, A.R. 2, Pitching. Add to this ruling:

"In cold weather, the umpire may announce to both teams that it is permissible for the pitcher to blow on his hand, on or off the rubber."

Rationale: Some umpires were unsure if this was legal.

Points of Emphasis

Pace of Play -- The committee is concerned that long delays in game action detract from what otherwise is an exciting and enjoyable game to watch, play and coach. There are several rules and umpiring mechanics the group believes can be enforced more consistently. In particular, the batter's box rule (the batter must generally keep one foot in the box during an at-bat), handling of conferences (defensive and offensive) and speeding the time between inning and during pitching changes are areas the committee identified as areas in need of improvement.

Set Position – Deceiving Baserunners. In the set position (Rule 9-1-b), the committee believes some requirements that the pitcher must follow have been relaxed in recent years. In particular, the committee is concerned that pitchers are deceiving runners by holding the ball in the pitching hand in front of the body and not at the hip or behind the body, as noted in this rule. Umpires and coaches are reminded that the initial penalty for this rule is a warning and more stringent enforcement of this rule is an expectation in the upcoming season.