



SOFTBALL AUSTRALIA OFFICIAL PLAYING RULES 2018-2021 POINTS OF EMPHASIS



NOTE: Changes or updates to the rules adopted at the 2017 WBSC-SD Congress and from previous POE are in bold italic font.

The Softball Australia Official Playing Rules were adopted by the WBSC-SD at the 2017 Rules congress.

This document should be read in conjunction with the Softball Australia Official Playing Rules **2018 - 2021**.

For Australian Championship Rules, *Technical Bulletins* and reference material please visit *Softball.org.au*

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POINTS OF EMPHASIS

1. ALTERED BAT

Any player found using an altered bat would be called out and ejected, if noticed, between the time they begin a turn at bat and before the first pitch, legal or illegal, to the next batter.

The Plate Umpire should automatically rule the batter out and ejected if they notice the altered bat being used by the batter when the batter is in the batter's box (starting or during a turn at bat).

If two batters use the same bat, once the next batter steps into the box with it, the umpire will rule altered bat, a play is considered to have taken place and the last batters turn at bat is legal.

In all other cases (i.e. before the batter enters the box, after a legal or illegal pitch to the next batter, or if noticed by the umpire between innings), the umpire will simply remove the bat from play, with no penalty to the offence.

NOTE: A bat is altered when

- a. The handle of a metal bat is replaced with a wooden or other type of handle, or
- b. Material is inserted inside the bat, or
- c. Excessive tape is applied - more than two layers - to the grip, or
- d. A bat is painted other than for identification at the top or bottom, or
- e. A flare or cone grip attachment is used on the bat, or
- f. A bat appears to have been tampered with in any way.

Engraved identification (ID) marking on the knob end of a metal bat is NOT considered altered. However, if such engraving is on the barrel end of a metal bat, it IS considered an altered bat. Laser marking for ID purposes is not considered altered, regardless of where it may be on the bat.

Umpires should visually inspect all bats before the game and prohibit the use of any altered bats in the game by informing the team coach which bats are not to be used and why. The bats should be removed from the team equipment.

2. APPEALS

A live or dead ball appeal is a play or situation on which an umpire cannot make a decision unless requested by a manager, coach or player of the non-offending team.

The following are appeal plays:

1. Missing a base.
2. Leaving a base on a caught fly ball before the ball is first touched.
3. Batting out of order.
4. Attempting to advance to second base after making the turn at first base.
5. Illegal substitutions.
6. The use of unreported players under the Replacement Player rule.
7. Illegal re-entry.
8. The use of unreported players under the Designated Player rule.
9. Runners switching positions on bases they occupied.

Appeals May Be Made By:

Only members of the defence may make the following appeals:

1. Missing a base.
2. Leaving a base on a caught fly ball before the ball is first touched.
3. Batting out of order.
4. Attempting to advance to second base after making the turn at first base.
5. Runners switching positions on bases they occupied.

Both offence and defence may make the following appeals:

1. Illegal substitutions.
2. The use of unreported players under the Replacement Player rule.
3. Illegal re-entry.
4. The use of unreported players under the Designated Player rule.

Cont. Appeals

Live Ball Appeals:

In all games, an appeal may be made while the ball remains alive, by a fielder, in possession of the ball, (a) touching a missed base or one left too soon on a caught fly ball, or (b) tagging the runner committing the violation, if they are still on the playing field.

Advance of Runners:

Runners may advance, or return, during a live ball appeal play when

1. The pitcher no longer has possession of the ball in the pitcher's circle, or
2. When the pitcher makes a play on any runner (a fake throwing motion is considered a play).

If "Time" is requested for the purpose of making an appeal, the umpire should grant it. Runners may not advance until the ball has been put back into play and the next pitch has been made.

Dead Ball Appeals:

A Dead Ball appeal may be made in all games, whenever the ball is dead for any reason, provided the ball is in the infield area. If the ball has gone out of play, runners must be given the opportunity to complete their base running responsibilities, before the Dead Ball appeal can be made. **The appeal cannot be made until the Plate Umpire has put the new ball into the game.** Any defensive team member, while in the infield area and with or without the ball, may make a verbal appeal on a runner missing a base, or leaving a base too soon on a caught fly ball. The administering umpire should then make a decision on the play.

NOTE: If a coach or manager of the defensive team wishes to make a Dead Ball Appeal, they may do so but only after stepping out of the dugout and onto the playing field. An appeal made from the dugout only should be disregarded.

Runners May Not Return to a Base:

A runner may not return to touch a missed base, or one left too soon on a caught fly ball, if

1. They have left the field of play,
2. A following runner has scored.

When to Appeal:

Appeals must be made

1. Before the next legal, or illegal, pitch, or before a play is made, and
2. **Before all defensive players have left fair territory. If a fielder makes the appeal the fielder must be on the infield when making the appeal.**
3. If, on the last play of the game, before the umpires leave the field of play.

NOTE: Appeals for Illegal Substitutions, Illegal Re-entries, unreported Replacement Players, or unreported returning Withdrawn Players may be made at any time while such player is still in the game. Appeals for runners switching the bases they occupied must be made while at least one of the runners is still on base or before the inning is over.

More Than One Appeal:

More than one appeal may be made but guessing games should not be allowed. EXAMPLE: The runner misses second base by a step but just touches the corner of third base. Even though an appeal is made at third (the umpire called the runner safe), an appeal may be made at second on the same runner.

Award of Bases:

An appeal must be honoured, even if the action of missing a base, or leaving a base too soon, occurred before or after an award of bases.

Home Plate and Missed Tag:

If a runner misses home plate and the catcher misses the tag, if no tag is made, the umpire should declare the runner safe. If an appeal play is then made, by tagging either the runner or home plate, the umpire should then make a decision on this appeal play.

Cont. Appeals

Force Out Appeals:

If an appeal is honoured at a base to which a runner was forced to advance and the out is a force out, i.e. no succeeding forced runner has been put out prior to the appeal; no runs would score if it were the third or last out.

NOTE: If, on an appeal for a forced runner missing a base, an out was made on a succeeding forced runner BEFORE the appeal, then the appeal play is considered to be a 'Time' play, as the force is no longer in effect. In this case, the determination on the appeal for missing the base is made at the time of the appeal and NOT at the time of missing the base and any runs that scored before the appeal may count.

On an appeal play the force out is determined by the force situation at the time of the appeal, and not at the time of the infraction. If a succeeding forced runner has been put out prior to the appeal, this is no longer a force out situation.

Tagging-up on Fly Balls:

If a runner leaves a base too soon on a caught fly ball and returns in an attempt to re-tag, this is considered a time play and not a force out. If the appeal were the last out of the inning, all runs scored by runners in advance of the appealed runner, and scored ahead of the legal appeal, would count.

Missing First Base:

If a batter-runner reaches first base but misses and passes it before the throw arrives, they are considered to have touched the base, unless an appeal play is made.

If a play is made at the double base on any batted ball and the batter-runner touches the fair portion of the base only, they are considered to have touched the foul portion, unless an appeal play is made before they return to the base after over-running it. EXCEPTION: If a play is being made on the batter-runner from first base foul territory, the batter-runner may touch the fair portion of the base and be safe. (See also POE #15)

Additional Out Appeals:

An appeal may be made after the third out, as long as it is made properly and is made to either cancel a run or to re-instate the correct batting order. EXAMPLE: One out with a runner on first and third when the batter hits a fly ball that is caught. Each runner leaves their base before the caught ball is touched. An appeal is made at first base for the third out. The defensive team then makes an appeal at third base before the fielders leave fair territory. The runner on third would then be declared out also and the run would not count.

End of Game Appeals:

If any situation arises which could lead to an appeal by the defence on the last play of the game, umpires should wait until all defensive fielders have crossed the foul line, on their way to the dugout, before leaving the infield. If teams line up for 'high fives', there is little chance for an appeal, even if the defensive fielders have not crossed the foul line. Umpires can leave the game at this point. No appeal can be made once the umpires have left the field.

3. BALL ROTATION PROCEDURE

The pitcher has a choice of which ball to use at the start of each inning. If both balls do not get into play in the first half of the first inning, the pitcher in the bottom half of the first inning MUST use the unused ball. No choice is offered.

The current game ball should be used until such time as it goes out of play or becomes unplayable. When the ball goes out of play, the umpire will give another ball to the pitcher. If the pitcher does not like that ball, remove it from the game and give them another ball. An umpire should never take a ball back from the pitcher and put it in their ball bag, unless it is at the start of the inning when the pitcher is selecting their game ball.

Cont. Ball Rotation Procedure

After an inning is completed, the ball should be returned to the vicinity of the pitcher's plate by the team leaving the field, or by the umpire. The pitcher taking the field now has a ball with which to start the next half inning. The pitcher may request the other ball from the plate umpire; however, they should give the first ball to the umpire prior to receiving the second ball. They should not have both game balls in their possession when making this choice.

4. BASE PATH

In the event of a play on a runner, the base path is established as soon as the fielder receives the ball and begins the attempt to tag the runner. The base path is then established as a direct line from the runner's position to the base.

A runner in a rundown play between two bases, while attempting to avoid being tagged, will legally establish a new base path every time they change direction.

5. BATS WITH DENTS

In determining whether a bat with a dent should be legal or not, an umpire should utilise their bat ring to slide over the barrel of the bat. Should the bat ring continue to slide over the entire barrel, the bat would be legal. If the bat ring will not slide over the entire barrel, the bat would not be legal and cannot be used. The intent of this rule is that bats should not have a flat surface where the ball could be hit. If the bat ring is able to slide over the barrel, the dent has not flattened the barrel and would not violate the intent of the rule.

6. BATTER – MUST REMAIN IN THE BATTER'S BOX.

Keeping the batter in the batter's box as much as possible will help speed up the game. After a batter first enters the batter's box, they must remain in the batter's box between pitches by keeping at least one foot in the box including taking signals and practice swings.

If the batter leaves the batter's box, delays play, and none of the exceptions below apply; the umpire shall call a strike. No pitch has to be thrown and the ball is dead.

Exceptions

1. If the ball is hit fair or foul
2. On a swing, or an attempted swing, which includes a slap or checked swing provided the momentum of the swing or attempted swing carries the batter out of the batter's box
3. If forced out of the box by a pitch
4. On a wild pitch or passed ball
5. If there is an attempted play
6. If "Time" has been called
7. If the pitcher leaves the pitcher's circle or the catcher leaves the catcher's box
8. On a three ball pitch that is a strike that the batter thinks is a ball

Umpires should use game management to control these situations to keep games moving. The rule has not been developed to have more strikes called. However, if the batter continues to delay play then a strike should be called.

7. BATTING ILLEGALLY

In order for the batter to be called out for batting illegally (out of the batter's box) one foot must be on the ground completely outside the lines of the box, when contact is made with the ball. The lines of the batter's box are considered inside the box. The batter is to be called out, if any part of a foot is touching home plate when they contact the ball, even though they may be touching the lines of the batter's box.

The batter is also considered to have batted illegally if, after taking their position in the batter's box, they step with one or both feet completely out of the box during the pitcher's delivery motion, then returns and makes contact with the pitch while completely inside the batter's box.

A batter hitting the ball illegally should be called 'Out' immediately and the ball is dead. The batter is out, whether the batted ball is fair or foul. In cases where there are no batter's box lines evident, good judgement must be used and the benefit of any doubt must go to the batter.

8. BATTING OUT OF ORDER

A batter shall be called out, on appeal, when they fail to bat in their proper turn, and another batter completes a time at bat in their place.

- a. The proper batter may take their place in the batter's box at any time before the improper batter becomes a runner or is put out, and any balls and strikes shall be counted in the proper batter's time at bat.
- b. When an improper batter becomes a runner or is put out, and the defensive team appeals to the umpire before the first pitch to the next batter, or before any play or attempted play, the umpire shall declare the proper batter out and nullify any advance or score made as a result of the improper batter's turn at bat.

NOTE 1: If a runner advances, while the improper batter is at bat, on a stolen base, wild pitch, illegal pitch or passed ball, such advance is legal.

NOTE 2: Any out obtained by the defence as a result of the improper batter's turn at bat shall be retained.

- c. When the improper batter becomes a runner or is put out, and a pitch is made to the next batter before an appeal is made, the improper batter thereby becomes the proper batter, and the result of their time at bat become legal.
- d. When the proper batter is called out because they have failed to bat in turn, the next batter shall be the batter whose name follows that of the batter thus called out. **If the next batter is the player called out, go to the next person in the line-up, this batter would not come to bat again until the next innings or the next time through the batting order.**
- e. When an improper batter becomes a proper batter because no appeal is made before the next pitch, the next batter shall be the batter whose name follows that of such legalised batter. The instant an improper batter's actions are legalised, the batting order picks up with the name following that of the legalised improper batter.
- f. Any batters who have not batted as a result of the re-established batting order simply miss their turn at bat until such time as their turn comes around again.

The umpire shall not direct the attention of any person to the presence in the batter's box of an improper batter. This rule is designed to require constant vigilance by the players and coaches of both teams.

There are two fundamentals to keep in mind:

1. When a player bats out of turn, the proper batter, on a legal appeal, is the player called out.
2. If an improper batter bats and reaches first base, or is out, and no appeal is made before a pitch to the next batter, or before any play or attempted play, that improper batter is considered to have batted in proper turn and establishes the batting order that is to follow.

9. CATCHER'S BOX

The catcher's box is 3.05m (10 feet) in length from the rear outside corners of the batters' boxes.

Catchers must remain in the catcher's box until the pitch is released. During a regular pitch to a batter, should the batter be in front of the batter's box, the catcher can move closer to the plate without penalty. At all times, the catcher must still avoid catcher's obstruction, as the batter legally has the right to the entire batter's box.

Obstruction does not require contact between the catcher and the bat, or the batter. The umpire's request for the catcher to move farther away from the batter to avoid injury or obstruction should always be obeyed. (See catcher obstruction under POE #32).

10. CHECK SWING/BUNT/SLAP HIT

A checked swing should not be judged solely by whether a batter broke the wrists or not. There are normally four areas that constitute whether or not the batter has swung at the ball, or checked the swing.

1. Did they roll their wrists?
2. Did they swing through the ball and bring the bat back, unless the bat came back before the pitch arrived?
3. Was the bat out in front of the body, or did the barrel of the bat pass the batter's front hip?
4. Did they make an attempt to hit the pitch, as in moving the bat toward the ball?
5. Was the swing still going forward when the pitch passed the batter?

In each situation, the umpire thinks in terms of priorities. First, was the pitch in the strike zone? If so, it is simply a strike. Second, did the batter swing at the pitched ball, or did they move the bat toward the pitched ball? In either case, it is the plate umpire's call. If in doubt, or if blocked out, they will call the pitch a ball. Umpires will not call the pitch a strike, unless it was in the strike zone, or the batter attempted to hit the ball. If the umpire calls the pitch a ball and the catcher requests help, the umpire should ask for help.

On a bunt attempt where the batter puts the bat across the plate, a strike would not be called if the ball were out of the strike zone, unless the batter moves the bat towards the ball. If the catcher fails to catch the ball on a missed bunt attempt with two strikes, the dropped third strike rule will apply.

When deciding whether an attempt to hit the ball is a slap hit or a bunt, the umpire should consider the manner in which the batter makes the attempt. If the batter brings the bat to a bunting position (usually horizontal or at a 45° angle) in front of the body, does not swing or chop at the ball, but merely allows the ball to hit the bat (thereby tapping it slowly into the infield), this should be deemed to be a bunt. This is true whether the batter's feet are stationary in the batter's box, or whether the batter takes running steps through the batter's box prior to hitting the ball. If there is no swing, or chopping motion while running through the box, and the batter fouls the pitch off on a 2-strike count, the batter would be out for bunting foul on the third strike.

Regardless of whether the batter is stationary in the box or running through the box when contact is made with the pitch, it can only be considered a slap hit if the batter, after coming round in a bunting position, withdraws the bat and then proceeds to swing at the pitch, either in a full blooded swing or a short, controlled chopping motion.

11. COACHES BOX.

Coaches should remain in the Coaches box especially during Offensive times at bat. They should not be allowed to see the catcher's signals from outside the box or delay the game by walking toward the batter.

Coaches are allowed to leave the Coaches box to assist runners advancing to bases, however shall not create interference and they should not delay the game.

Coaches should not restrict umpires getting into position to call plays or move to positions

12. COMMUNICATION DEVICES

No forms of communication devices are allowed on the playing field or in the dugouts. This includes communication between the coaches on the field; the coaches and the dugout; the coaches and any player; or the spectator area and the field, including the dugout, coaches and players. This also includes visual devices controlled or relayed to the dugout or coach. Team members must not communicate with people outside the playing field.

If communication devices are used, a warning shall be issued for the first offence. Any subsequent infraction by the coach/manager of the same team shall result in the ejection of the Head Coach.

Umpires should prohibit use of any such equipment, including mobile telephones, two-way radios etc.

13. CONFERENCES - The intent of this rule is to reduce delays in the game.

Defensive:

A defensive charged conference takes place, when the defence requests a suspension of play for any reason and a representative from the dugout enters the playing field and confers with any defensive team member. A conference should also be charged if a defensive player leaves the diamond and goes to the dugout to receive instructions, regardless of whether or not they requested "Time". The umpire should advise the team representative whenever they declare a charged conference. The penalty for exceeding the 3 conference limit in a seven-inning game, or for a second charged conference in the same inning in an extended game, is removal of the pitcher, who is the listed pitcher at the time of the excess conference, from the pitching position for the duration of the game. This pitcher is declared an Illegal Pitcher and if they return to the pitching position after being removed, and one pitch has been thrown, they are ejected from the game.

A charged conference is considered to be over when the representative crosses the foul line, if applicable, on the way back to the dugout.

The following are not defensive conferences:

1. The team representative informs the umpire that they are making a substitution and they do so without crossing the foul line.
2. The team representative reports a change to the umpire and then enters the diamond to speak with any defensive player.
3. The team representative reports a pitching change to the plate umpire, either before or after crossing the foul line and speaking with the pitcher or any other defensive player.
4. Shouting instructions to the defensive players from the dugout area.
5. A dugout representative confers with any defensive player during a charged offensive conference and is ready to play ball when the offence is ready.

A playing coach may confer with any defensive player at any time without a conference being charged. However, an umpire may control repeated meetings between a playing coach and the defence, if repeated unnecessary meetings continue to take place the umpire should issue a warning and then may eject the coach.

Offensive:

An offensive charged conference occurs, when the offensive team requests a suspension of play and is granted "Time" by an umpire, to permit a team representative (usually the coach) to confer with a batter and/or runner(s), or any other offensive team member. (This includes coaches among themselves).

The umpire may charge a conference without "Time" being granted if the offence is in conference and the game is delayed, as the intent of this rule is to reduce delays in the game.

Only one charged conference is allowed per inning. The umpires should refuse to grant a second conference.

PENALTY: If the offensive team insists on holding a second conference in an inning after being informed by the umpire that it is not permitted, or if the offence delays the game by taking a second conference, the umpire should eject the team representative from the game.

The following are not offensive conferences:

1. A team representative confers with an offensive team member during a defensive charged conference and is ready to play when the defence is.
2. If the pitcher is on base and is putting on a warm-up jacket.

Conferences should not be charged to either the offence or defence, if they confer at any time during an umpire's "Time Out" (e.g. the umpire is conferring with the scorekeeper), provided they are ready to play when the umpire is ready to resume the game.

The Penalty for a coach "insisting" on a second Offensive Conference states they are ejected, this does not cover when a coach has a second charged conference without permission, umpires should work to prevent this if possible.

14. DELAYED DEAD BALL

There are five situations when a violation of a rule occurs, it is recognised by an umpire and the ball remains alive until the conclusion of the play.

These situations are:

1. An Illegal Pitch.
2. Catcher's obstruction.
3. Obstruction.
4. A fair batted, thrown or pitched ball is hit with detached equipment.
5. Plate umpire interference.

15. DELIBERATELY CRASHING INTO A FIELDER WHO HAS THE BALL (Interference)

In order to prevent injury and protect the defensive player attempting to make a play on a runner, the runner must be called out, if they remain on their feet and deliberately crashes into a defensive player who has the ball while waiting to apply a tag. NOTE: If the act is determined to be flagrant, the offender will be ejected.

To prevent a deliberate crash ruling, the runner can slide, go around the defender (if outside the 0.91m [3 foot] base path and the fielder is attempting to tag, the runner would be called out), or return to the previous base touched. A runner may slide into the fielder, provided they are able to reach the base on the slide.

When a runner is called out for deliberately crashing into a fielder holding the ball, the ball becomes dead. Each runner must return to the last base touched at the time of the interference, unless forced because the batter became a batter-runner.

If the runner deliberately crashed into a fielder holding the ball before they were put out and, in the judgement of the umpire, it was an attempt to break up an obvious double play, the immediate succeeding runner will also be declared out.

If the deliberate crash occurs after the runner is called out and, in the judgement of the umpire, it was an attempt to interfere with the fielder's opportunity to make a play on another runner, the runner closest to home plate will be declared out.

If an obstructed runner deliberately crashes into a fielder holding the ball, the obstruction call will be ignored, and the runner will be called out. An award for obstruction does not give the runner the right to interfere.

If a defensive player is fielding a thrown ball and the flight of the ball carries or draws the fielder into the path of the runner, this would not be considered a crash.

If the ball, runner and the defensive player all arrive at the same time and contact is made, the umpire should not invoke the collision (interference) or obstruction rule. This is merely incidental contact and the ball remains in play, provided it does not enter dead ball territory.

16. DESIGNATED PLAYER

This individual can be listed in any of the nine spots in the batting order. The player listed in the number 10 spot in the line-up (who plays defence only) will be known as the 'FLEX'.

- a. A designated player (DP) may be used for any defensive player, provided it is made known prior to the start of the game. The DP must be indicated on the line-up as one of the nine hitters in the order.
- b. The name of the player for whom the DP is batting (FLEX) will be placed in the 10th position in the line-up.
- c. The DP, and any substitutes for the DP, must remain in the same position in the batting order for the entire game. The FLEX, and any substitutes for the FLEX, must enter the game in the 10th position in the line-up.
- d. The DP may be substituted for at any time, either by a pinch hitter or pinch runner. This player becomes the DP and has all the options of the DP position. The starting DP and a substitute for the DP can NEVER be in the game at the same time, unless either is in the game as a Replacement Player.

Cont. Designated Player

- e. The FLEX may be substituted for at any time. This player becomes the FLEX and has all the options of the FLEX position. The starting FLEX and a substitute for the FLEX can NEVER be in the game at the same time, unless either is in the game as a Replacement Player.
- f. The starting DP, or their substitute, may be replaced in the offensive line-up by the FLEX, as a hitter or a runner. This reduces the number of players in the game from ten to nine. The DP and the FLEX can NEVER be on offence at the same time, unless either is in the game as a Replacement Player.
- g. The DP may replace the FLEX on defence. This reduces the number of players in the game from ten to nine. The DP and the FLEX CAN be on defence at the same time.
- h. The starting DP may re-enter the game one time, and if they do, they must return to the original DP position in the batting order. If the DP re-enters and the FLEX was batting in the DP position, the FLEX shall
 - (i) Return to the number 10 position in the line-up, play defence only, and is not considered to have left the game, or
 - (ii) Leave the game.
- i. The starting FLEX may re-enter the game one time, and if they do, they shall
 - (i) Return to the original FLEX position (no 10) in the line-up, or
 - (ii) Take the place of the starting DP in the line-up.
- j. If the FLEX re-enters into the No 10 position the DP shall continue to bat in the DP position in the batting order and play offence only and is not considered to have left the game.
- k. The DP may play defence for any player at any position. Should the DP play defence for a player other than the one for whom they are batting (the FLEX), that player (the position player) will continue to bat (as an Offensive Player Only [OPO]), but not play defence and is not considered to have left the game.
- l. The role of the DP/FLEX is never terminated. A team may go from ten to nine players and back to ten players any number of times during the game. The game may end with ten or nine players.

Understanding this rule will be made much easier if you remember the following critical points:

1. Both the starting DP and starting FLEX may re-enter once.
2. Only NINE players may bat.
3. The DP and FLEX can NEVER be on OFFENCE at the same time.
4. The DP may NEVER play DEFENCE only.
5. If the DP is NOT playing OFFENCE, they are considered to have left the game.
6. The FLEX may NEVER play OFFENCE only.
7. The FLEX may only enter the game on OFFENCE in the original DP batting position.
8. If the FLEX is NOT playing DEFENCE, they are considered to have left the game.

NOTE: When the FLEX Player plays offense for the Designated Player, the Designated Player is now considered to have left the game and may re-enter once in their place in the batting order. This change must be reported to the plate umpire.

and

NOTE: When the DP plays defence for the Flex, the Flex is considered to have left the game and may re-enter once in the 10 spot in the batting order or in the DP's spot. This change must be reported to the plate umpire.

17. DISTRACTING ADORNMENTS.

No exposed items, including jewellery, judged by the umpire to be distracting to opposing players may be worn or displayed by players. The umpire shall require the item to be removed or covered.

Medical alert bracelets and/or necklaces, if deemed distracting shall be required to be taped to the body in such a manner that the medical alert information is visible.

This rule allows an umpire to require a player to remove or cover jewellery that is distracting to other players. Players and team management are responsible for their own safety and the safety of other players.

18. DOUBLE BASE

The use of the double base at first base is designed to prevent collisions, whenever possible, between batter-runners and defensive players making a play at the base.

The base is bisected by the first base foul line, with half in fair territory and the other half (must be a different colour) in foul territory.

It is important to note that the foul portion of the base only comes into play when a play is being made on a batter-runner at the base. Once the batter-runner passes the base the foul portion is no longer deemed to exist and must be treated as if it is simply part of the ground and not a base. This being the case, runners tagging up on fly balls, leading off on a pitch, or returning to base on an attempted pick-off can only use the fair portion of the base. If they use the foul portion, or if they stand only on the foul portion after having returned to the fair portion, then they place themselves at risk of being declared out.

The batter-runner must use the foul portion of the base when a play is made at the base on a dropped third strike that remains in fair territory or on a fair-batted ball from fair territory. Should the batter-runner beat the throw but only touches the fair portion of the base, this is to be treated as if the batter-runner missed the base and they would be 'out' if the defence makes a legal appeal before the batter-runner returns to the fair portion of the base, after overrunning the base.

A defensive player must use only the fair portion of the base when a play is being made on the batter-runner on any live ball from within the foul lines or from third base foul territory.

If a live ball play is being made on a batter-runner from first base foul territory, e.g., a dropped third strike, a fair-batted ball deflected into foul territory, or a fair-batted ball being thrown from right field foul territory, then both the defensive fielder and the batter-runner may use either portion of the base without penalty. A live ball play from first base foul territory also permits a fielder to recover an errant throw at first base and tag the fair or foul portion of the base before the batter-runner touches either portion of the base to record an out.

In these instances when the batter-runner may use either portion of the base, they will not be subject to an interference call if they are hit with a thrown ball while running inside fair territory, rather than the one metre (3 ft) running lane, unless they deliberately interfere with either the thrown ball or the fielder taking the throw.

Incidental contact should be ruled, i.e. no interference or obstruction, if a fielder moves onto the foul portion of the base to receive a throw from first base foul territory on any live ball play, and such movement was so late that the batter-runner could not avoid contact. However, if the fielder sets up on the foul portion of the base on this type of play in ample time, then the batter-runner would be expected to change direction and touch the fair portion of the base.

Although the batter-runner is not obligated to touch the fair portion of the base when they have time to do so (remember: the batter-runner may use either portion), if they do not and simply continue running in the one metre (3 ft) running lane and collides heavily with the fielder taking the ball in an effort to make the fielder miss or drop the ball, then this could be considered a flagrant action and subject the player to ejection.

Returning to first base

A runner that has run through first base and been declared safe; when they return to first base, they must return to the fair portion of the base. Should they stand on the foul portion only, it is considered not in contact with the base and the runner will be called out, if they are tagged with the ball, or they stands on the foul portion of the base, while the pitcher has possession of the ball within the pitcher's circle.

The rules relating to any runner holding their base, or returning directly to a base while the pitcher has the ball in circle is relative to all bases. We should be aware the runner needs to be able to come back to the base and then stand on the base within normal time frame, this rule change is not designed to have more runners called out, it merely means the runner must stand on the base when the pitcher has the ball in the circle.

19. DUGOUT CONDUCT

This rule reflects on coaches, players, substitutes or other bench personnel. Once the game begins, only players that are involved in the game can be outside the dugout except when the rules allow or the umpire justifies the reason. A manager walking on the field for a conference is an example of a rule allowing a coach or player on the field, or if one of those in the dugout has to go to the restroom, this is an example of umpire justification. Players cannot be out of the dugout between innings standing near the batter's box observing the pitcher warming up (unless it is the on-deck batter, who must be in the on-deck circle), nor can they step outside the dugout to have a cigarette or to observe the game from behind the backstop or side fence. Smoking and use of e-cigarettes are prohibited in the dugout.

20. EIGHT FOOT CIRCLE RULE

When a runner is legitimately off their base after a pitch, or as a result of a batter completing their turn at bat, and is stationary when the pitcher has the ball in the circle, they must immediately (i.e., within 3 seconds) attempt to advance to the next base, or immediately return to the base left. The responsibility is completely on the runner. There is no obligation on the pitcher to look, fake or throw.

Failure to immediately proceed to the next base, or return to their original base after the pitcher has the ball in the circle, will result in the runner being declared out.

Once the runner has returned or stops at any base for any reason, they will be declared out if they leave said base, unless

- a. A play is made on the player, or another runner.
- b. The pitcher leaves the circle, or loses possession of the ball.
- c. The pitcher releases the ball to the batter.

If two runners are off base and two different umpires call each runner out, they must determine which runner was called out first and return the other runner to the base they left.

When a runner has been declared out, the ball is dead. It is not possible to obtain two outs on this rule.

A pitcher fielding a batted ball in the circle is just another fielder and runners can leave their base. If they leave their base, the same rule applies while the pitcher holds the ball in the circle; once the runner stops, they must decide which way to continue or be called out.

A base on balls, or a dropped third strike, is treated the same as a batted ball, as long as the batter-runner continues past first base. For scoring purposes, when they advance to second base, it is considered a stolen base. If they stop at first base, however, and then steps off the base after the pitcher has the ball within the circle, they are out.

A batter-runner overrunning first base cannot start back to the base and, before reaching first, run for second base. If a batter-runner commits to first base (moving towards first), the runner must return to this base. The batter-runner cannot change their mind and advance to second once it looks like they are moving directly to first following the overrun, or they will be called out. Umpire's judgement will determine committing towards a base.

If a runner is moving toward a base when the pitcher receives the ball in the circle, that runner may continue toward that base and is allowed to stop once, then must immediately attempt to advance to the next base or immediately return to the base left.

If, after the pitcher has the ball within the circle, the runner starts back to their original base, or forward to another base and then stops, or reverses direction, they are out, unless the pitcher makes a play on the runner. When a play is made on a runner, they may stop, or reverse their direction.

The runner is out, if they stand off their base and do not immediately attempt to advance, or return, after the pitcher has the ball within the circle.

If the pitcher throws the ball from within the circle, carries it outside the circle, sets it on the ground, or otherwise loses possession of it, including handing it to another player, it is interpreted as making a play and runners on base may leave at their own risk, provided the ball is not dead. A fake throw is also considered making a play. It is to be deemed as a fake throw if the pitcher raises their arm, as if to throw the ball.

NOTE: Being in the pitcher's circle is defined as having both feet within, or partially within, the line. The pitcher is not considered in the circle, if either foot is completely outside the line.

21. EQUIPMENT ON THE PLAYING FIELD

No loose equipment, miscellaneous items, or a detached part of a player's uniform, other than that being legally used in the game at the time, should be within playable territory. Official equipment that may be within playable territory, with no penalty, includes the batter's bat, the catcher's mask, umpire paraphernalia, or any equipment belonging to a person assigned to the game. Loose gloves, hats, helmets, jackets, balls, bats (including the on-deck batter's bat), or any other loose equipment, miscellaneous item, or detached uniform part which are within playable territory and are not being legally used in the game at the time, could cause a blocked ball or interference.

Thrown Ball:

If a thrown ball hits loose equipment belonging to the team at bat, a dead ball is declared immediately. If such action interferes with a play, interference is ruled. The batter-runner or runner being played on at the time of the interference shall be declared out, (if this player has scored prior to the blocked ball being ruled, the runner closest to home is called out), the ball is dead and other runners must return to the last base touched prior to the thrown ball hitting the loose equipment. NOTE: If no apparent play is obvious, a blocked ball is declared, no one is called out, but all runners must return to the last base touched at the time of the dead ball declaration.

If the loose equipment belongs to the team in the field, it becomes a blocked ball and the overthrow rule applies.

If the equipment belongs to any person assigned to the game the ball remains alive and in play.

Batted Ball:

A batted foul ball touching loose equipment is a foul ball.

A batted fair ball touching loose equipment belonging to

1. The offence is considered a dead ball and runners return to the last base held at the time of the pitch, unless they are forced to advance when the batter-runner is awarded 1st base on the base hit. NOTE: If the umpire considers the contact prevented a defensive player from making a play on the batter-runner, or any other runner, interference will be declared, and the batter-runner or runner being played on will be out.
2. The defence is considered a dead ball and all runners, including the batter-runner, are awarded two bases from their position at the time of the pitch.
3. Any person assigned to the game remains alive and in play.

22. FAKE TAG (A Form of Obstruction)

A fake tag occurs when a fielder, without the ball, deceives the runner by impeding their progress (i.e. causing them to slide, slow down or stop running).

Obstruction is called when a fake tag is made as mentioned above. The umpire shall give the Delayed Dead Ball signal and play continues to its completion. The obstructed runner, and each runner affected by the obstruction, will always be awarded the base, or bases, they would have reached had there not been any obstruction. Remember, each runner is awarded a base, or bases, only if, in the judgement of the umpire, they would have made the base, or bases, had there not been any obstruction.

The umpire should rule obstruction on a fake tag. Continued fake tags should result in ejections. In flagrant cases where the sliding runner gets hurt, the offending player should be ejected without a warning.

If a fielder fakes a tag but the runner continues on to the next base without sliding or breaking stride, there is no rule violation. Obstruction is the act of a fielder, in the base path without the ball, impeding the progress of a runner. In this case, the progress was not impeded. A warning should still be given.

23. FALLING OVER THE FENCE ON A CATCH

The fence is an extension of the playing field, making it legal for a player to climb and make the catch. If they catch a ball in the air and the momentum carries the fielder through, or over the fence, the catch is good, the batter-runner is out, the ball is dead and, with less than two outs, all runners are advanced one base without liability to be put out.

Guidelines are:

1. If they complete the catch before they touch the ground outside the playing area, the catch is legal, or
2. If they complete the catch after they touch the ground outside the playing area, it is not a catch.

If a portable fence is used which is collapsible and the fielder is standing on the fence when they catch the ball, it is a legal catch. A defensive player can climb a fence to make a catch, so they should be able to stand on a fence that has fallen to the ground. There should be no doubt left in an umpire's judgement whether the fence is on the ground, 15.2 cm (six inches) off the ground, or 0.91m (three feet) off the ground when the defender steps on it. As long as the defensive player has not stepped outside the playing area (other side of fence) the catch will be legal.

24. FORCE OUT

A force out can be made by tagging a runner who is forced to advance to a base as a result of the batter becoming a batter-runner, or by touching the base while in possession of the ball.

NOTE: It is not possible to have a force out on a caught fly ball, as the batter is no longer a batter-runner.

25. HITTING THE BALL A SECOND TIME

When an umpire considers the act of a batter hitting the ball a second time, they should place the act into one of three categories

1. If the bat is in the hands of the batter, when the ball comes in contact with it, and the batter is in the batter's box, it is a foul ball. If an entire foot of the batter is completely outside the batter's box, on the ground, they are out. When in doubt, don't guess the batter out. Call it a foul ball.
2. If the bat is out of the batter's hands (dropped or thrown) and the moving bat hits the ball in fair territory, the ball is dead, and the batter-runner is out. If the ball hits the stationary bat on the ground, the batter-runner is not out. The umpire should then determine whether the ball is fair or foul, based on the fair/foul rule. If the ball rolls against the stationary bat in fair territory, it remains alive. If it stops, or is touched in fair territory, it is a fair ball. If it touches the stationary bat in fair territory and then rolls to foul ground and stops, it is a foul ball. If the ball rolls against the stationary bat in foul territory, it is a foul ball regardless.
3. If a batter swings at and misses the pitched ball but
 - a. Accidentally hits it on the follow-through, or
 - b. Hits it on the second swing, or
 - c. Hits the ball after it bounces off the catcher, or their mitt, the ball is dead, and all runners must return to the base they occupied prior to the pitch. In (b) and (c), if the act is intentional with runners on base, the batter will be called out for interference.

26. ILLEGAL BAT

Any player found using an illegal bat would be called out, if noticed, between the time they begin a turn at bat and before the first pitch, legal or illegal, to the next batter.

The plate umpire should automatically rule the batter out, and the bat removed from play, if they notice the illegal bat being used by the batter when the batter is in the batter's box (starting or during a turn at bat).

In all other cases (i.e. before the batter enters the box, after a legal or illegal pitch to the next batter, or if noticed by the umpire between innings), the umpire will simply remove the bat from play, with no penalty to the offence.

Cont. Illegal Bat.

NOTE: **Only an official bat that meets the standards of the WBSC-SD Equipment Standards Commission, and is stamped with the WBSC-SD or ISF Logo must be used.** Resin, pine tar and spray substances may be legally applied to the bat handle.

Umpires should visually inspect all bats before the game and prohibit the use of any illegal bats in the game by informing the team coach which bats are not to be used and why. Damage to bats, such as a torn grip that can be quickly fixed, may be repaired and used as long as the bat meets specifications of a legal bat. Illegal bats that cannot be repaired, including bats with an audible rattle, should be removed from the team equipment.

27. IMAGINARY LINE OR DEAD BALL AREA

When a fielder carries, kicks, pushes or throws a live ball into a dead ball area, the ball becomes dead and a base, or bases, is awarded to all runners. One base shall be awarded if the act is unintentional. If the act is intentional, two bases are awarded. The base award is governed from the last base legally touched at the time the ball became dead.

If a chalk line is used to determine an out-of-play area, the line is considered as being in play. If a fielder's foot is touching the line, **even if part of the foot is touching dead ball territory**, they are considered in the field of play and may make a legal catch or throw. If either foot is on the ground completely in dead ball territory (not touching the line), the ball becomes dead; no play may be made.

If a player has one foot inside, or touching, the line and the other foot in the air at the time the catch is made, the catch is good, and the batter-runner is out. If the fielder then steps into a dead ball area (foot on the ground), the ball becomes dead and all runners are awarded one base from the last base touched when the ball became dead.

Defensive players cannot take advantage and intentionally throw the ball or step into a dead ball area in order to prevent a runner who has missed a base, or left too soon on a caught fly ball, from returning to the base. If it is ruled the defensive player intentionally threw the ball or stepped into the dead ball area, allow the runner to return to their base.

28. INTENTIONALLY DROPPED FLY BALL

The ball cannot be considered as being intentionally dropped unless the fielder has actually caught the ball, controlled it in the bare hand or glove and then dropped it. Merely guiding the ball to the ground should not be considered an intentionally dropped ball.

29. INTENTIONAL BASE ON BALLS

It is permissible for the batter to be walked intentionally, provided the pitcher, catcher or coach notifies the umpire of the intent. When notified, the umpire should rule the ball dead and send the batter to first base. The notification may be made at any time after the batter has entered the batter's box, regardless of the count, up until such time as the batter completes their turn at bat. Runners may not advance when an intentional walk is issued, unless forced by the batter becoming a batter-runner. If two successive batters are to be walked, the plate umpire will not award the second intentional walk until the first batter reaches first base. When an intentional walk is issued, it is considered the same as throwing a pitch. No appeal on a previous play will be allowed.

30. INTERFERENCE

Interference is defined as the act of an offensive player, or team member, which impedes, hinders, or confuses a defensive player attempting to execute a play. It may be in the form of physical contact, verbal distraction, visual distraction, or any type of distraction that would hinder the fielder in the execution of the play, provided the fielder is making a genuine attempt to field the batted ball without, in the umpire's judgement, purposefully attempting to draw an interference call. Defensive players must be given the opportunity to field the batted ball anywhere on the playing field, or to throw the ball without being hindered.

Cont. Interference.

Runner interference includes

1. A runner that interferes with a fielder executing a play,
2. An untouched fair-batted ball contacting a runner,
3. Intentionally interfering with a thrown ball, or
4. A thrown ball that strikes any loose equipment, detached part of a uniform or miscellaneous item left in playable territory by the offensive team.

NOTE: If a runner, without changing stride, simply runs in front of a fielder attempting to field a fair batted ball and this causes the fielder to error the ball because they lost sight of the ball, then interference should NOT be called in this case. However, if in the action of charging forward to field the ball, the fielder is forced to stop in order to avoid a collision with the runner, causing the fielder to error the ball, then interference SHOULD be called in this instance.

Interference by a Batter Runner or Runner in relation to physical incidental contact that does not create interference. The Umpire must watch for the reaction of the defensive player as a result of the action of the offensive player. Then the umpire must judge if the offensive player impedes, hinders or confuses a defensive team member attempting to make a play. If this contact creates interference, then the umpire should call a dead ball and rule interference. A mere brushing against a defensive player by a runner may not be interference if the defensive player can still easily make the play.

Umpire Mechanic:

Following observing a potential Batter-Runner or Runner interference, hesitate before making a call, while taking in all the elements. For example:

- ***Did the action of the offensive player cause the defensive player to drop a catch or misplay the ball?***
- ***Did the action of the offensive player cause the defensive player to flinch or turn their head?***
- ***Was the action of the offensive player deliberate?***

Notes:

1. ***This is not a delayed dead ball situation and should not be signaled as such.***
2. ***If it is determined that there was no interference, umpires should be prepared to explain their ruling to coaches.***

A fielder has the right to field a batted ball, even if the fielder is fielding a batted ball and they had just errored the ball and still playable. To be considered to be "Fielding a batted ball" they would generally be within 1 metre of the ball, be able to reach down and grab it and make a play; any more distance and generally the runner then has right of way, and the fielder could obstruct the Runner or Batter Runner.

When a runner interferes with a fielder, the umpire must determine if the interference occurred before or after the runner who interfered was put out and then apply the proper rule.

When a fair, untouched batted ball hits a runner and, in the umpire's judgement, any fielder had an opportunity to make an out; it is interference, provided the runner was not in contact with a base.

It is not interference, if the batted ball touches, or is touched by, a player before it contacts the runner and the runner could not avoid contact with the ball, or if the runner is standing in foul territory.

EXCEPTION: If the runner in foul territory interferes with a fielder attempting to catch a foul fly ball.

A runner could be standing on a base and a defensive player bumps the runner, while watching the flight of the ball. If the defensive player fails to make a catch on a ball that could be caught, it is the umpire's judgement whether interference should, or should not be called. The rule provides that a runner must vacate any space needed by a fielder to make a play on a batted ball, unless the runner has contact with a legally occupied base when the hindrance occurs. In this case, the runner should not be called out, unless the hindrance is intentional.

For deliberate crash interference, refer to POE #15.

Cont. Interference.

Batter interference occurs while the batter is at bat and before they hit the ball. It occurs when,

1. While in the batter's box, they intentionally interfere with the catcher's throw, or hinders the catcher in their attempt to throw, on an attempted steal. This includes a batter who swings the bat AFTER the ball has reached the catcher, as a batter can only legally swing at a pitched ball as it is travelling toward the catcher. The only reason this is done is intent by the batter to impede the catcher's attempt to throw. This only applies in Fast Pitch.
2. By stepping out of the batter's box, they hinder in any way the catcher's attempt to catch, or throw, the ball.
3. They intentionally interfere with a thrown ball while either in or out of the batter's box.
4. They interfere with the catcher, or a thrown ball, on a play at the plate. The batter's box is not a sanctuary for the batter when a play is being made at the plate.

Batter-Runner interference occurs, after the batter has completed their turn at bat, when

1. They run outside the one metre (3 ft) running line and interferes with a fielder at first base attempting to catch the ball, or with the thrown ball that the fielder is attempting to catch.
2. They interfere with a fielder attempting to field the batted ball or with a batted ball that a fielder is attempting to field.
3. They interfere with a thrown ball or with a fielder attempting to throw the ball.
4. After hitting the ball, the Batter Runner releases their bat in such a manner that it hits the catcher and prevents them from making an out.

NOTE: If they merely drop their bat and the catcher trips over it, there is no interference.

On-deck batter interference occurs when, they interfere with a fielder's opportunity to make a play on the batter-runner or a runner.

Coach's interference occurs when

1. A base coach runs toward home and draws a throw.
2. They interfere with a fielder attempting to catch, or thrown a ball.
3. They deliberately interfere with a thrown ball.
4. They assist a runner while the ball is alive.

The coach's box is not a sanctuary.

Spectator interference occurs when

Any person, other than a team member, enters the field of play, or reaches onto the field from the stands and interferes with a fielder, or the ball.

It is not interference if the fielder reaches into the stands. The field belongs to the fielder and the stands belong to the spectator.

Umpire interference occurs when

1. An umpire is hit by a fair, untouched batted ball before it passes a fielder, excluding the pitcher, or after it passes a fielder, including the pitcher and another fielder had a chance to make an out. The batter-runner is awarded 1st base (this is an exception to the statement that someone must be called out on interference).
2. A ball gets lodged in the umpire's equipment or clothing.
3. An umpire interferes with a catcher's attempt to throw out a runner stealing, or on an attempted pick-off from the catcher to any base. It is interference only if the runner is not put out, in which case they are returned to their base.

In no other case is umpire interference ruled.

On any interference by an offensive team member, the ball is dead, and someone must be called out. When batter, runner, on-deck batter, or coach interference occurs, each other runner must return to the last base touched at the time of the interference, unless forced because the batter became a batter-runner. In the case of batter-runner interference, all runners must return to the last base held at the time of the pitch.

31. MEDIA COVERAGE

Authorised media personnel can be on the playing field, but they should not use tripods, or deliberately interfere with a player or the ball. They are permitted to use a monopod. If they deliberately interfere, the ball is dead. They must be able to move, to avoid being hit by an overthrown or batted ball. Should they, or their equipment, be accidentally hit, the ball remains alive. The photographer must carry all photographic equipment. No equipment can be left on the ground. If an overthrown or batted ball becomes accidentally lodged in photographer's equipment, the overthrow or out-of-play rule applies just like any other overthrow or batted ball that becomes lodged anywhere else on the field.

32. OBSTRUCTION

Obstruction is the act of a fielder who impedes the progress of a runner or batter-runner who is legally running bases, while

1. Not in possession of the ball, or
2. Not in the act of fielding a batted ball, or
3. In possession of the ball and who deliberately pushes a runner off base, or
4. In possession of the ball, but not in the act of making a play on the runner which intentionally impedes the progress of that runner, while they are legally running the bases.

A fielder completely blocking a base without possession of the ball constitutes obstruction. The fielder must give a runner access to a base if they do not have the ball.

Whenever obstruction occurs, whether a play is being made on a runner or not, the umpire will declare obstruction and signal a Delayed Dead Ball. The ball will remain alive until the conclusion of the play. If the obstructed runner is put out, prior to reaching the base they would have reached had there not been obstruction, a dead ball is ruled and the obstructed runner, and each other runner affected by the obstruction, will be awarded the base(s) they would have reached, in the umpire's judgement, had there not been obstruction.

An obstructed runner should not be called out between the two bases where they were obstructed, unless they are properly appealed for missing a base, or for leaving a base before a fly ball was first touched, in this case obstruction may be ruled, however they are not automatically protected between the bases. If the runner committed an act of interference after the obstruction, this too would overrule the obstruction. The obstructed runner also loses their protection if they obtain the base they would have made, in the umpire's judgement, had the obstruction not occurred and they are then tagged out between the bases where the obstruction occurred, after a subsequent play has been made on another runner.

A runner, who is obstructed at a base in such a manner that the obstruction prevents them from touching that base, is not required to touch that base before advancing to the next base. In this instance an appeal for missing the base should be declined.

When an obstructed runner is awarded a base, they would have made had there been no obstruction and a preceding runner is on that base, "Time" will be called. The obstructed runner will be awarded that base and the runner occupying it will be entitled to the next base, without liability to be put out.

It should also be clear that when saying "a runner cannot be called out between the two bases they were obstructed" does not pertain when another violation is being played upon. (E.g., A runner leaving second base too soon on a fly ball is returning after the ball is caught and is obstructed between second base and third base is protected by obstruction, however if the umpire determines the runner would not have made it back to second base, regardless of the obstruction, prior to the throw arriving, they would remain out).

If the obstructed runner passes the base, they would have reached had there not been obstruction, they are running at their own risk. If legally tagged the out would stand. The ball remains alive and other plays may be made.

When the runner is obstructed during a rundown, a Delayed Dead Ball is signalled. If the runner is subsequently tagged out, after being obstructed, a dead ball is ruled, and they are awarded the base they would have made had there been no obstruction. If the ball is overthrown after the obstruction, the runner may advance. They may not be called out between the two bases where they were obstructed.

Cont. Obstruction.

When other runners are advancing and an umpire calls "Time" following a play on an obstructed runner, a rule of thumb for placement of the other runners is: If they have not reached halfway to the next base, they must return to the previous base. However, if they have advanced over halfway, they are allowed to advance to the next base.

If a runner is obstructed and knocked down and a succeeding runner passes the obstructed runner, and the umpire believes that the Obstruction caused the succeeding runner to pass, then the umpire may call time and award the runners the bases they would have made had the obstruction not occurred. If the passing runner had already been called out, and assisted the obstructed runner, the umpire should call time and award the obstructed runner the base they would have advanced to safely had the obstruction not occurred. This is not an out on the obstructed runner.

Catcher obstruction is the act of a defensive player that impedes, or prevents, a batter from striking at or hitting a pitched ball, and is also a Delayed Dead Ball situation.

Should catcher obstruction be ruled, and the batter hits the ball and reaches first base safely, and all other runners advance at least one base, the obstruction call is cancelled. All action as a result of the batted ball stands. If the batter-runner does not reach first base, or if one of the other runners does not advance at least one base, the coach of the offensive team has the option of taking the result of the play, or taking the award for the obstruction. In this case, the batter is awarded first base and other runners advance only if they are forced because of the award.

If catcher obstruction occurs when a batter steps out of the box on a legitimate attempt to hit the ball, the obstruction will take precedence and the penalty for catcher obstruction will be enforced. The batter must be given the opportunity to hit the ball. Should the batter delay their swing, and clearly the attempt is no longer to hit the ball but rather to interfere with the catcher's throw on a steal attempt then batter's interference would be the ruling.

33. OVERRUNNING FIRST BASE

After over-running first base when a play is made at the base, the batter-runner may legally turn to their left, or their right, when returning to the base. If any attempt is made to advance to second, regardless of whether the batter-runner is in fair or foul territory, they are liable for an appeal out, if they are still off base and are tagged by a defensive player with the ball.

If the batter-runner rounds the base towards second on a hit to the outfield, they place themselves in jeopardy of being called out for attempting to advance to second, if a legal appeal play is made and they are still off base.

The batter-runner can utilize either portion of the double base whenever the ball is in the outfield, or no play is being made at first base. If a play is made at first base, but the ball is overthrown, this also allows the batter-runner to use the fair portion if trying to advance to second base. If the batter-runner overruns first base and returns to the foul portion (rather than the fair portion), sufficient time to touch the fair portion should be given, particularly in youth play.

34. OVERTHROWS

An overthrow is a play in which a ball is thrown from one fielder to another, resulting in the ball either going beyond the boundary lines of the playing field, or remaining in play, but then becomes blocked.

Runners are awarded two bases on overthrows that go out of play or become blocked as a result of hitting loose equipment belonging to the defensive team that does not belong on the field. Regardless of who made the throw, two bases are awarded from the last base touched at the time the ball left the hand.

Direction of runners has no bearing on the award, (e.g. When an overthrow is made on a runner returning to a base, they are awarded two bases from that base. If the runner was returning to first base and the throw was from the outfield, and the ball left the outfielder's hand before the runner got back to first base, the runner would be awarded third base).

If a runner touches the next base and returns to their original base, the original base they left is considered the last base touched, for the purposes of an overthrow award.

Cont. Overthrows.

If two runners are between the same bases at the time of the award, the award of bases is determined by the position of the leading runner. Two runners between first and second will be awarded second and third; however, if two runners are between second and third, both will be awarded home.

When a fielder loses possession of the ball on an attempted tag and the ball then enters the dead ball area, or becomes blocked, all runners are awarded one base from the last base touched at the time the ball entered the dead ball area, or became blocked. On pitched balls going out of play, the runners are awarded one base from the last base touched at the time of the pitch. If a batter receives a base on balls and the fourth ball gets away from the catcher and goes out of play, they will be awarded first base only.

35. PITCHER'S UNIFORM

A pitcher should be dressed identically to other players on the team. A long-sleeved undershirt of any team colour is acceptable under the uniform top. If worn, it may not extend past the wrist so a clear gap can be seen between the ball and the end of the shirt. If two or more players (including the pitcher) have an undershirt on, they must be identical in colour and style. No player may wear ragged, frayed, or slit sleeves on an exposed undershirt.

A pitcher may wear a batting glove and/or wristband on the glove hand and wrist. The batting glove may be white. A pitcher may wear the pitcher's toe plate on their shoe.

Other than an undershirt, nothing may be worn below the pitching arm elbow, including a band-aid or similar material on the fingers.

NOTE: A warming (compression) sleeve may be worn; however, it will be treated in the same manner as a long sleeve undershirt. Both arms must be covered and both sleeves must be of the same colour as the undershirt worn by players wearing a long sleeve undershirt. Skin coloured warming sleeves are allowed as they would not cause a distraction.

Skin coloured elastic tubing is considered to be a medical sleeve, so cannot be worn on the pitching forearm, unless it is covered by an undershirt.

The pitcher's glove may be any combination of colours, provided none of the colours (including the lacing) are the colour of the ball. Gloves worn by any player other than the pitcher may be any combination of colours.

36. PITCHING (*V1.1 Revision in Blue Text*)

There are six basic features of the pitching rule. They are:

1. Contact With Pitcher's Plate:

Pitchers must have the pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate and both feet within the 61cm (24 inch) length of the pitcher's plate. There should be no misunderstanding that if the pivot foot is on top of the pitcher's plate and the non-pivot foot is within the 61cm (24 inch) pitcher's plate, the pitch is legal.

It is also legal for the pitcher to have the pivot foot's heel in contact with the front of the pitcher's plate or the toes of the pivot foot in contact with the back of the pitcher's plate. If the pivot foot is only in contact with the side of the pitcher's plate **or the back foot is completely outside the length or imaginary line of the pitchers plate an Illegal Pitch should be called.** - See Diagram on page 3

2. Signal: A signal must be taken, or appear to be taken, by the pitcher while **standing with at least one foot on the plate.** The ball must be held in one hand only (either in the glove or open hand) and the hands must clearly be separated. The ball held in one hand may be in front of or to the side of the body. Taking a signal prevents a pitcher from walking onto the pitcher's plate and putting the batter at a disadvantage, by throwing a quick pitch. The signal may be taken from the catcher or from the dugout.

3. Preliminary to Release of Pitch: Pitchers must keep **the pivot foot** in contact with the pitcher's plate during the entire preliminary process. After taking the signal, the pitcher must address the batter, by taking the ball in both hands in front, or to the side, of the body but not behind the body. The pitcher must then come to a full and complete stop for a minimum of two seconds and not more than five seconds, after which the pitcher may begin the pitch. ***The pitcher may take a backward step with the***

Cont. Pitching.

non-pivot foot prior to the 2 second pause, however there can be no backward movement during or after the pause as this is an Illegal Pitch.

The stepping (non-pivot) foot can only move forward with the start of the pitch. When the pitcher brings their whole body to a complete stop, the hips, not the shoulders, must be in line with first and third bases. This permits the pitcher to turn their upper body so that the ball and glove are hidden from the batter's view at the time of the stop. It is permissible for the pitcher to adjust or rotate the ball in their glove with the bare hand during the stop, provided the rest of the body is completely stopped.

The pitcher cannot step off the pitcher's plate with either foot after the pause/stop has been made ***or the pitch has started.*** The only exception to this is if the pitcher is in position, ***prior to starting the pitch,*** decides they do not want to deliver the ball and wishes to step off the pitcher's plate. In this situation, the pitcher must keep both hands together and step back off the pitcher's plate with the hands still together. Once both feet are off the pitcher's plate, the hands must then be separated, and time should be called.

4. Start of Pitch: The pitch starts after the hands have been put together and the pitcher then takes one hand off the ball, or there is any motion that is part of the wind-up. The pitcher sliding their feet across the pitcher's plate, either forward or sideways, would be considered as starting the wind-up motion. The pitcher may not push off from a place other than the pitcher's plate ***prior to separating the hands.***

It is not a step if the pitcher slides either foot across the pitcher's plate, the pivot foot turns, the heel or foot slides provided contact is maintained with the plate and there is no movement backwards off the plate. Lifting the complete pivot foot off the pitcher's plate and returning it to the plate, creating a rocking/pendulum motion, is an illegal act.

NOTE: It is legal if the pitcher raises the heel, or toe of the pivot foot or the stepping foot provided that, in the umpire's judgement, the pivot foot would be in contact with the pitcher's plate if it were grounded ***and the pivot foot does not move forwards or backwards such that it would be off the plate*** prior to the step forward by the non-pivot foot.

The pitcher may also lift the heel of the pivot foot, and use the front of the pivot foot to start their momentum. In this action, it is permissible to lift the heel of the pivot foot, twist the foot and push off with the toes or the ball of the foot, provided the pivot foot does not move forward off the pitcher's plate prior to the push off.

NOTE 2: Clearing the cleats to enable the foot to slide is not considered to be lifting the foot or to be losing contact with the pitcher's plate.

5. Wind-up and Delivery: The wind-up/windmill may not be two full revolutions of the arm. The pitcher's hand may go past the hip twice during the windmill action (if used), as long as there are not two complete revolutions. The wrist may not be farther from the hip than the elbow (in a throwing motion). The delivery may not have a stop, or reversal, of the windmill or forward motion.

6. Step or Release: A step (only one) may be taken and if taken it must be forward, toward the batter and within the 61cm (24 inch) length of the pitcher's plate. (To be illegal, the stepping foot must be on the ground and completely outside the imaginary lines drawn from both edges of the pitcher's plate to the home plate).

The non-pivot (stepping) foot should be the first foot ***to move. The pivot foot must remain in contact with the pitcher's plate or push off and drag away or be airborne prior to the stepping (non-pivot) foot touching the ground.***

The pitcher may leap, from the pitcher's plate, land and, with a continuous motion, deliver the ball to the plate. The pivot foot may push off and/or follow through with this continuous action. This is not considered a Crow Hop.

It is legal to drag, leap or hop and then land and throw as long as the original push starts from the pitcher's plate. It is not legal to step off with the pivot foot and then drag, leap or hop and throw.

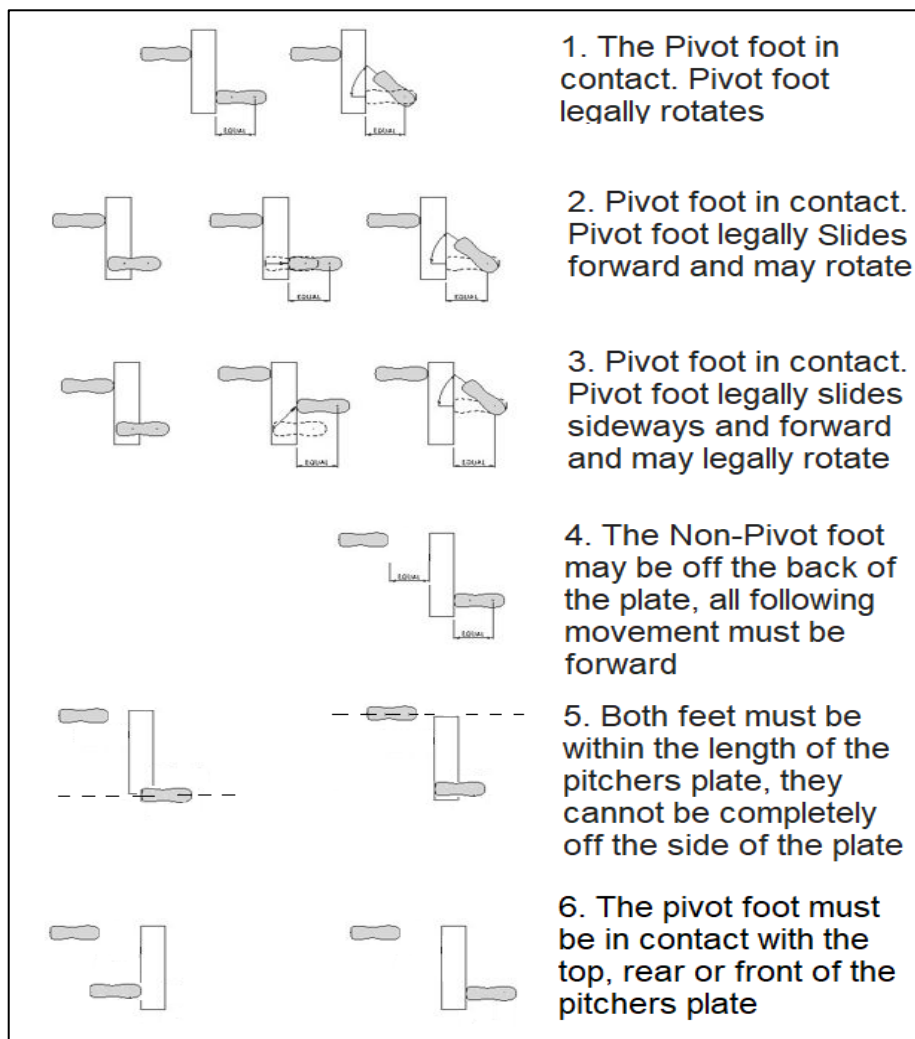
As the pitcher pushes from the pitcher's plate all movement of the pitching arm must be continuous.

Pushing off with the pivot foot from a spot other than the pitcher's plate, before the non-pivot (stepping) foot has left the pitcher's plate ***or ground*** is considered to be a Crow Hop and is illegal.

An illegal pitch should be called as soon as the action is illegal, umpires do not need to not wait for the pitch to be released.

Note: If a pitcher repeatedly violates the pitching regulations, the pitcher may be excluded from the pitching position for the remainder of the game.

The following diagram shows legal feet placement and actions



The below is not a definitive set of legal positions, just some of the more unusual ones.



Pic 1. Legal lift of the toes.



Pic 2. Legal placement



Pic 3. Legal Heel lift

37. PITCHING – WARM UP

There is an allowance in time for both the pitchers at the start of the game for each initial half innings to use not more than 1 minute to deliver up to 5 warm up pitches. This is also applicable for each new pitcher at the start of, or during an inning in progress. However, a pitcher returning to pitch in the same half-inning will not be entitled to warm-up pitches.

After the first innings, the pitcher from the previous inning has one minute to deliver up to three warm-up pitches. If one minute has expired or is about to expire, the Umpire will restrict the pitcher to one warm-up pitch. To keep the game moving, if the defensive team does not send out the pitcher and a catcher right away, or if the defensive team does not use a warm-up catcher that is ready, restrict the pitcher to one warm up pitch. Encourage a team to have another person not in the game receive warm-up pitches until the catcher is dressed and ready. Do not allow the team to delay the last pitch for the catcher, or by the time the throw around happens considerable time will be lost.

None of the above applies if the Umpire delays the start or resumption of play or during time out, substitutions, conferences etc. Umpires should work to keep the game moving.

38. PROTESTED GAME UPHeld AND RESCHEDULED

When a protested game is upheld, the game is to be rescheduled from the point at which it was protested. EXCEPTION: An upheld protest for the use of an ineligible team roster member will result in a forfeit to the team not at fault. Although the same line-ups are to be used when the game is resumed, there is no penalty for substitutions legally placed into the line-ups at this time. Even if a player was not at the protested game, they are legal for substitution purposes when the game is rescheduled, as long as they are on the team roster.

If a player was removed or ejected from the original game after the protest was filed, that player may legally play in the rescheduled game, because they were legally in the game at the time of the protest, unless the ejection also drew suspension for unsportsmanlike conduct. The provisions of the Re-Entry rule apply to the rescheduled game.

39. RUNNER HIT BY A FAIR BATTED BALL

While in Contact With the Base: The runner will never be called out, unless they deliberately interfere with the ball. The ball remains alive, or dead, depending on the closest defensive player. If the closest defensive player is in front of the base the runner is in contact with, the ball is alive. However, if the closest defensive player is behind the base, the ball is dead. If the ball is ruled dead and the batter-runner awarded first base, only runners forced to advance due to the batter-runner being placed on first base shall be advanced one base.

While Not in Contact With the Base: The runner will be called out, or ruled safe, depending on the interference rules and position of the fielder. See also POE #30.

40. RUNS SCORING ON THE LAST OUT OF AN INNING

A run will not score, if the last out of the inning is

- a. the batter-runner being put out at first base, or
- b. a preceding runner being forced out at another base because of the batter becoming a batter-runner.

Missed bases could result in a force out. (E.g. If the runner from first base missed second base on a base hit and that was the third out of the inning when properly appealed, any run[s] scored would not count).

See POE #2 for when runs may count in force out appeal situations.

An appeal play on a runner leaving a base too soon on a caught fly ball is considered a time play and not a force. If the appeal results in the third out of the inning, any runners preceding the appealed runner would score, provided they crossed home plate prior to the out.

41. SHOES

Metal cleats are legal for both adult male and female players. They are not legal for any level of junior play. Polyurethane or plastic cleats, shaped to look like a metal triangle toe or heel plate, are also illegal for all players. If there are nubbins, or round plastic cleats in addition to the triangle plate, the shoe is legal. Cleats that screw *onto* a post are illegal, but cleats that screw *into* the shoe are legal.

42. STRIKE ZONE

In establishing the strike zone, the following points should be considered:

- 1 The height of the zone is determined by the whole ball having to pass under the batter's **sternum (breastbone) or the whole ball having to be above the bottom of the batter's kneecap** when the ball crosses home plate.
- 2 The width of the zone is determined by adding the width of the home plate (43.18cm [17 inches]) to the approximate width of the ball (10.16cm [4 inches]). As a strike is judged by any part of the ball passing across any part of home plate the actual width of the zone would be considered as a ball width added to either side of home plate, i.e. 10.16cm (4 inches) twice plus 43.18cm (17 inches), giving a total width of the zone as approximately 68.60cm (25 inches).

Judging a reasonable strike area is difficult when a batter is taking an unnatural stance, as is the case in crouching. A batter's strike zone is established with the natural stance on the swing (i.e. if a batter crouches and then comes up out of the crouch on the swing, then the strike zone is established when the batter comes up and not in the crouch position).

NOTE: A batter will normally adjust their body to a more natural batting stance when the pitched ball is on its way to the plate. The adjustment may be a minor modification, but the changed stance should now be used to establish the strike zone.

43. SUBSTITUTIONS

All substitutions must be reported to the Plate Umpire who, in turn, will report the changes to the official scorekeeper. The names and numbers of all available substitutes should be listed on the official line-up card submitted to the Plate Umpire at the start of the game. However, if a substitute player is not listed on the card, but is on the official team roster, they can be added after the game has commenced.

If a substitute is in the game without reporting, they are considered an Illegal Substitute. If brought to the plate umpire's attention by the offended team, after the first legal or illegal pitch, and before the team in violation informs the umpire, the umpire will declare them an Ineligible Player and remove the player from the game. (**Refer to Rule 3.2.8** Effect for various situations).

If a manager removes a substitute from the game and re-enters the same substitute later in the game, this is considered an Illegal Re-entry. The use of an Illegal Re-entry results in the Illegal Player and their manager being ejected. This would not be a forfeit. The only time a game is forfeited for a substitution violation is when an Ineligible Player is back in the same game, or the removal or ejection of a player creates a situation where there are not enough players to continue the game.

Violation of any substitution rule, including the use of an Illegal Re-entry, an unreported Replacement Player entering the game, or an unreported Withdrawn Player returning to the game, must be handled as an appeal by the offended team.

44. TEMPORARY RUNNER.

A Temporary Runner is a player who may run for the catcher of record from the preceding half inning, who is now on base with two out. The use of the Temporary runner is optional for the offensive coach. The Temporary Runner must be the player, who at the time of taking the option, is scheduled to bat last and is not on base at the time the option is taken.

In an effort to speed up the game, a runner may be used for the catcher who is on base with two out. This will give the catcher time to put on the catching equipment and be ready to take warm up pitches at the start of the next inning.

If the Temporary Runner is not used for the catcher and in the umpire's judgment, one minute has expired or is about to expire the umpire shall limit the pitcher to one warm up pitch.

When the catcher was at bat or the on-deck batter, the defensive team should have a warm up catcher or a defensive player ready to take the warm up pitches or the umpire shall limit the pitcher to one warm up pitch.

Note: See Australian Championship Rules variation

45. TIE GAMES, OR GAMES CALLED THAT ARE LESS THAN REGULATION

When these games are rescheduled, the same procedure should be followed as stated in POE #38, PROTESTED GAME UPHeld AND RESCHEDULED.

In determining tie games after five innings (regulation game) have been played, the team batting second (home team) must have had the opportunity to bat and tie the score. If it has scored more runs than the team batting first (visiting team) and the game is called in the bottom of the fifth or sixth inning, the home team shall be the winner.

If the visiting team has scored more runs than the home team in the sixth or seventh inning and the home team has not had the opportunity to complete its turn at bat, the score reverts back to that of the previous completed inning. If that score were tied, it would be a tie game. If the score were not tied, a winner would be declared if one team was ahead and five full innings had been played.

If a game is called before five full innings have been played (four and one-half if the home team is ahead), or it is a declared tie game, it will be replayed.

46. TIE BREAKER RULE

During each half inning of the inning used to enforce the tie breaker, the offensive team shall begin its turn at bat with the player who is scheduled to bat ninth in that respective half inning being placed at second base, (e.g., If the number five batter is to lead off, the number four batter in the batting order will be placed on second base. A substitute may be inserted for the runner). The tie-break runner is not required to touch first base before assuming their position on second base.

It is the responsibility of the umpire and scorekeeper to notify the teams involved, as to who starts at second base. If the wrong player is placed on the base and it is brought to the umpire's attention, there is no penalty. Correct the error and place the proper runner on the base. This should occur even if a pitch has been thrown, or if the runner has advanced a base. If a substitute has been entered without reporting and one pitch has been thrown, the umpire should enforce the illegal substitute penalty, when it is brought to their attention.

In scoring, the run scored by a player starting as a runner at second base shall be charged to the defensive team and not the pitcher. Depending on the judgement of the official scorekeeper, a run scored by any other player will be charged to the pitcher's ERA.

47. WARMING SLEEVE (UNDERSHIRTS).

Any player may wear a uniform coloured undershirt (it may be white). It is not mandatory that all players wear an undershirt however if one player wears one, those that are worn must be alike. Warming (compression) sleeves may be worn but will be treated in the same manner as a long sleeve undershirt. Both arms must be covered, and both sleeves must be of the same colour as the undershirt worn by players wearing long sleeve undershirts in team colours.

Under Softball Australia Championship rules players may wear any team colour as an undershirt or sleeve, however if the sleeve colour used by a pitcher is judged distracting by an umpire they may rule it to be removed.

Medical skin-coloured elastic tubing is not considered a warming sleeve and may be worn by any player, other than a pitcher and may be on one arm only. Skin-coloured warming sleeves may be worn on one, or both arms.

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