



MEMORANDUM

February 27, 2008

P.O. Box 6222
Indianapolis, Indiana 46206
Telephone: 317/917-6222

Shipping/Overnight Address:
1802 Alonzo Watford Sr. Drive
Indianapolis, Indiana 46202

www.ncaa.org

TO: Head Baseball Coaches, Conference Coordinators of Umpires and Conference Baseball Contacts.

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

SUBJECT: 2008 Major Rule Change Review and Interpretations.

This correspondence is intended to assist the baseball community with the understanding and implementation of the major rules changes for the 2008 season.

1. *Bat and Helmet Checks.* Umpires will no longer conduct bat and helmet checks prior to each game. At the plate conference, the head coach will be asked to certify that bats and helmets meet NCAA specifications. Umpires are encouraged to check bats during the course of the game and to follow NCAA rules if illegal equipment is found.
2. *Bullpen Personnel.* The rule dealing with personnel in the dugout was expanded to include a team's bullpen. This change was made to bring the rule book in concert with the NCAA Championship Manual. Umpires should report violations of this rule to their conference administrator. As a reminder, ejected persons are never allowed to remain in a team's dugout or bullpen. Only eligible players, in uniform, coaches, managers, athletic trainers, physicians, scorekeepers and bat persons shall occupy a team's dugout.
3. *Post-game Ejections.* A post-game or post-participation ejection of a pitcher carries a stiffer penalty than in 2007. When a player has been removed as a pitcher and does not remain in the game in any other capacity and this player verbally confronts and umpire, this player is suspended for the next four regularly scheduled games. Games added to a team's schedule after the player has been ejected as a pitcher do not count in the four game suspensions.
4. *Plate Conference – Head Coach Requirement.* The head coach must attend the pregame plate conference for any non-conference single game, the first game of a doubleheader or the first game of any series. This is to ensure that both teams and the umpires are fully aware of any ground rule and allows the umpires to meet both head coaches.

5. *Plate Conference – Head Coach Requirement.* The head coach must attend the pregame plate conference for any non-conference single game, the first game of a doubleheader or the first game of any series. This is to ensure that both teams and the umpires are fully aware of any ground rule and allows the umpires to meet both head coaches.
6. *Hit by Pitch Rule.* This rule has been clarified by the committee for this season. The batter must make an attempt to avoid the pitch. If a pitch *freezes* a batter and he is not able to avoid a pitch and the pitch is clearly in his batter's box, first base is awarded. If a pitch hits the batter outside the vertical lines of the batter's box and the hitter makes no attempt to avoid the pitch, the batter remains at the plate and the pitch is called a *ball* or *strike*.

Another way to look at this rule change, if a batter hits the ball with any part of his body by moving his body part towards the pitch, the batter will be kept at the plate and the pitch called a ball or strike, depending upon the pitch's location. If the ball hits the batter as the batter is attempting to avoid the pitch, the batter is awarded first base. This guidance should assist umpires and coaches with the adjudication of this rule.

7. *Uniform Jackets.* Base coaches may elect to wear a jacket outside their uniform top if it includes the team's logo and is consistent with a team's uniform color and apparel.
8. *Pitching Conferences.* The committee changed the rule to define the end of a pitching conference at the mound. A defensive conference ends when the new pitcher begins the first of his eight warm up pitches or when the coach leaves the dirt circle of the mound.

Situation 1: May the coach visit briefly with his infielders, on the dirt part of the mound, before the new pitcher begins the first of his eight warm up pitches? **Ruling:** Yes.

Situation 2: Once a mound conference has been concluded, may the coach return to visit with his new pitcher or stop to talk to his infielders? **Ruling:** Under the following circumstances, this may be allowed. If the coach has unused free conferences remaining, he may do one of the above and be charged an additional conference. If the coach does not have any free conferences left, he may have a visit with one of the two entities above (return to his pitcher; stop and talk to the infielders on the grass) but the coach will be required to remove the new pitcher he has just brought in after that pitcher has completed pitching to the obligatory one batter or a runner is retired while he is pitching to the first hitter he has to face.

The visit that results in the pitching change is not a charged conference. Simply, a visit with the new pitcher and the infielders (if the coach wishes) before the warm ups begin is a conference. When this has concluded, coaches should leave the dirt circle and go to the dugout. This rule change is intended to speed up the pace of play and eliminate unneeded delays.

9. *Interference-Obstruction.* If a fielder misplay a batted ball and the ball is in the immediate vicinity and the fielder is in the act of picking up (fielding) the ball, when contact is made by the runner, interference on the runner is the correct call. If the fielder is chasing after a ball that he or a teammate has misplayed and contact with a runner occurs, the fielder is guilty of obstruction. A fielder is entitled to attempt to field a batted or deflected ball that is in his immediate vicinity. The fielder is not entitled to chase after it without being call for obstruction if there is contact with a base runner.

The ball remains alive on an *obstruction* call until the play concludes. The umpire will place the runner or runners on the base they would have attained had there been no obstruction. If a play is being made on a runner and that runner is obstructed, that runner is awarded at least one base beyond the last base attained before the obstruction.

10. *Set Position.* The rule requiring the pitcher to have his pitching hand either by his side or on his hip when taking the sign from the catcher was also clarified this season. This rule **has not** changed at all. The committee simply asked that the rule be uniformly enforced throughout NCAA baseball in 2008.

The committee members felt that when base runners were not able to see the pitching hand, they were unable to determine when the pitcher had come or had started to come set. The penalty for a first offense is a warning and then a balk is to be called for the remainder of the game. The warning is for a team and not for an individual.

An approved ruling from 2007 allows the pitcher to bend deeply at the waist with the pitching arm hanging loosely, straight down. This is sometimes referred to as the *gorilla* position. Bending at the waist is a part of this approved *set position*. Standing straight up is not considered a part of the *gorilla* position.

Thank you for your time and attention to this information and good luck this season.

JP:tyh