



**NCAA BASEBALL RULES CHANGES AND POINTS OF EMPHASIS  
JANUARY 2019  
2019-2020 SEASON**

- **2020 New Bat Regulations – 1-12**
  - Reminders of new bat regulations that take effect in 2020 and/or 2021.
    - 2020 season - the bat barrel color must be predominantly contrasting color to the ball.
      - Between the 18-inch mark and the end cap.
    - 2020 season – Division I; 2021 season – Divisions II and III – mandatory bat barrel compression testing.
      - Prior to each regular season series or single date of competition. (See also Rule 4-10).
- **Protective Helmet for Bat/Ball Persons – 1-15**
  - Requires that all non-roster, designated bat/ball persons wear a double-ear flap protective helmet while performing their duties.
    - Non-roster = team personnel other than players or coaches.
    - Designated = person whose primary duty is to take care of bats and/or game balls during the contest.
    - Enhance the safety of support personnel.
- **Dead Ball Area Restriction- 1-16-b**
  - Dead Ball Area on Home Plate Side of Dugout
    - Designated for use by ball/bat persons.
    - Cannot be occupied by any uniformed players, coaches, or other team personnel.
    - Cannot be considered part of dugout.
    - Dead ball area should be clearly marked.

- **Intentional Base on Balls – 2-7**
  - Allows defensive team’s head coach to signal umpire and intentionally walk the batter without throwing four (4) pitches.
  - Prior to the at-bat beginning OR during an at-bat:
    - Protocol - Call “Time”, the ball is dead.
    - Award the batter first base and advance any other runners(s) forced to advance by the batter being walked.
  - Pace of play improvement.
- **Intentionally Disrupting Pitcher’s Delivery – 5-15-a-2**
  - Batter may not use tactics with obvious purpose to disrupt the pitcher’s delivery.
    - Example – Batter intentionally drops his bat just before a 3-0 pitch.
  - If a balk or illegal pitch occurs, or if the pitch is called a ball, the call shall be nullified.
  - The penalty for a deliberate unsportsmanlike act is ejection from the contest.
  - If the disruptive act was not intentional or unsportsmanlike, “Time” is called and play is resumed.
- **Backswing Interference – 6-2-d**
  - If the batter swings and misses a pitch, and the backswing unintentionally hits the catcher or the ball, the pitch shall be called a strike, the ball is dead, and no runners advance on the play.
  - Deletes the previous language “*as the pitch is caught*” and provides more consistent enforcement.
  - The exception in 6-2-d-2 remains. If the catcher is in the act of throwing when the contact occurs, “Time” is called and runners return unless the catcher’s initial throw ***directly and immediately*** retires the runner.
  - The penalty for batter’s interference described in Rule 6-3-b is administered in the same way. The ball remains live if the catcher’s throw ***directly and immediately*** retires the runner. If there is not an immediate tag to retire the runner, the ball is dead and interference enforced.

- **Defensive Conferences Limit – 6-5-f**

- Maximum of six (6) defensive conferences without a pitching change are allowed per regulation game [plus one (1) during extra innings].
- Maximum of three (3) of these conferences may include a coach during regulation (similar to existing rule).
  - Coach may be involved in the “extra” conference during extra innings.
- A player leaving his position to confer with the pitcher, including a pitcher leaving the mound to confer with a player, is a charged defensive conference.
- Brief incidental communications that do not delay the game are not considered charged conferences.

- **Defensive Conferences Limit – 6-5-f**

- Pitching change required if:
  - A coach makes a second trip to the same pitcher in the same inning;
  - A coach has already been involved with three (3) charged defensive conferences during regulation or the “extra” conference during extra innings; or
  - A team has already used all permitted charged conferences and a coach goes to the mound.

- **No “Free” Offensive Conference During Defensive Charged Conference – 6-5-f-4**

- An offensive conference is charged if a batter or any runner leaves their position during a defensive charged conference.
  - Runners at first or third base may talk with their respective coaches during a defensive conference.
  - A pitching change is not a charged conference.
    - Therefore, during a pitching change, the next batter and any runners are allowed to leave their positions to meet with a coach but should return before the last warmup pitch so the game can be started promptly or risk being charged with an offensive conference.
- More consistent enforcement.

- **Hit By Pitch – 7-4-i, 8-2-d-1**

- A batter who, in the judgment of the umpire, makes a movement to intentionally get hit by the pitch, is not awarded first base and a strike is added to the count, regardless of the location of the pitch.
  - “Freezing” is not considered making a movement to be hit by the pitch *if the pitch is within the batter’s box*. Getting hit by a pitch *within the batter’s box* without making any movement would allow the batter to be awarded first base.
- This judgment by the umpire cannot be argued. (3-6-f-Notes 1 and 2).
- If video review is being utilized, a coach could use one of his challenges to have this situation reviewed. (App. E-2)

- **Obstruction – 2-55, 8-3-e-1-Note**

- “On a play at any base, the defensive player must clearly have possession of the throw before blocking the base with any part of the defensive player’s body.”
- More restrictive interpretation of “act of fielding”.
  - Throw must be on target and arriving at approximately the same time as the runner. Fielder must be about to receive the throw and within a step and reach in the attempt to catch the throw.
- Goals
  - Reduce the amount of contact during plays at any base.
  - Simplify umpire judgment, especially during scoring plays at home plate.

- **Windup Position – 9-1-a**

- To be in the windup position, the pitcher shall stand with:
  - His chest and shoulders generally facing the batter,
  - His pivot foot on or in front of and touching the pitcher’s plate and,
  - *The free foot behind or touching (breaking) the plane of the front edge of the pitcher’s plate.*
- Actual delivery of the pitch –

- May take one step backward or sideward (*not forward*) and one step forward with the free foot.
- May pause during delivery from a windup (no pause is allowed if using a set position). (9-1-a-Note 2)
- **Set Position – 9-1-b**
  - The set position is indicated when:
    - the pitcher stands with his pivot foot in contact with and *parallel to the pitcher's plate*, and;
    - his free foot in front of the pitcher's plate.
  - The pitcher may turn his shoulders and face the batter while receiving the sign prior to facing the respective foul line and bringing the hands together in the set position.
  - Penalty for illegal pitching position –
    - With the bases unoccupied – illegal pitch.
    - With runners on base – balk.
    - The previous warning on first offense is *deleted*.
- **Balk for Feint to Third Base – 9-3-a**
  - If there is a runner or runners, a balk shall be called for the following actions by a pitcher:
    - From a pitching position, any feinting motion (without completing the throw) toward the batter or toward first *or third* base;
  - 9-3-c-1-Note – If the pitcher throws to the first *or third* baseman who is playing off the base, a balk shall not be called if the fielder moves toward the base in an attempt to retire the runner.
  - It is legal to step and feint a throw to second base.
  - Can still step off the rubber and feint a throw to a base.

- **Expanded Video Review – Appendix E Section 2**

- The six (6) types of plays that have been reviewable are maintained.
  - (a) If a batted ball is fair or foul. The ball must first touch the ground or a fielder beyond the initial position of the first or third baseman.
  - (b) If a batted ball is a ground-rule double or a home run.
  - (c) Any “catch” or “no catch” in the outfield or foul territory.
  - (d) A “no catch” can be changed to a “catch” in the infield:
    - With runners on base, if it results in the third out.
    - With no runners, at any time.
  - (e) Spectator interference.
  - (f) Scoring plays at home plate including collisions (illegal and/or malicious slides) or time plays.

- **Expanded Video Review – Appendix E Section 2**

- Six (6) additional types of plays are approved for review.
  - (g) Force and tag plays at any base.
  - (h) Plays involving runners passing a preceding runner, scoring prior to the third out and whether a runner touched a base.
  - (i) Plays involving hit by pitch.
  - (j) If a runner failed to retouch his base after a fair or foul ball is caught.
  - (k) Non-home run boundary calls including the placement of runners following a boundary call.
  - (l) If interference occurred in an attempt to break up a double play.

- **Video Review Challenges – Appendix E Section 2**

- Each head coach is allowed a maximum of two (2) opportunities to request the result of a play be reviewed.
- A coach can challenge any of the 12 types of reviewable plays at any time.

- The crew chief can decide to review plays “a” – “f” at any time during the game. He may choose to review plays “g” – “l” during the last two (2) innings of regulation or during any extra innings.
- If a trained review official is used (centralized or on-site), they are an extension of the umpiring crew and can call for a review using these same guidelines.
- **Pitch/Between Innings Clock Protocol – Appendix F**
  - The mandated use of a visible field clock did not receive final approval for games at all levels of NCAA play, but is *highly recommended*.
  - The rules relating to the 20 second time limit between pitches with no base runners and the 120 second limit between innings are not “guidelines”! They should be monitored and enforced consistently throughout every game.
  - The 120 second time limit between innings begins shortly after the last out is made and should be consistent every inning.
  - The pitcher must be ready to pitch (holding the ball and touching the pitcher’s rubber) and the batter in the batter’s box and ready to hit before the end of 120 seconds. The plate umpire then indicates “Play” to start the 20 second clock for the first pitch.
- **Points of Emphasis**
  - Pace of Play
    - Keep the game moving.
    - Enforce batter’s box and timing rules consistently.
  - Running lane violations
    - Many complaints last year that this rule is not being enforced consistently and teams may be intentionally instructing runners to run to first base in fair territory.
  - Coach/Player/Umpire Interactions
    - Work remains to maintain professional interactions and reduce the number of necessary ejections.
    - Every participant shares this responsibility.