



# BASEBALL 2021

A supplement to the NCAA Baseball Rules • Prepared by the editors of *Referee*

## Lineup Language

### Rule Tweaks Related to DH, Concussed Players



When Eric Nilson, Kirkland, Wash., accepts the lineup card from a coach during the pregame meeting at the plate, he must understand how the coach plans to utilize the designated hitter. The NCAA has overhauled the designated hitter rule (7-2) for the 2021 season to more similarly mirror the one used in professional baseball.

College baseball will feature several new wrinkles during the 2021 season as a result of rule changes approved by the NCAA during the offseason.

The rule changes were first proposed by the NCAA Baseball Rules Committee during the summer and gained final approval from the NCAA Playing Rules Oversight Panel in September 2020.

#### Designated Hitter (7-2)

The NCAA has overhauled its designated hitter (DH) rule to more similarly mirror the one used in professional baseball. One exception is the starting pitcher may be co-listed in the lineup as the pitcher and designated hitter. The new rule also requires the designated hitter listed in the starting lineup to bat at least once unless the opposing team changes pitchers or the designated hitter becomes injured or ill before his spot in the lineup comes to bat.

The change is intended to simplify the DH rule while maintaining the flexibility of using the two-way player (pitcher/DH) in the collegiate game.

**Play 1:** During the pregame meeting with the umpires, team A's head coach turns in a batting lineup featuring nine batters. Jones is listed as the starting pitcher. Ruling 1: Jones is, by default, also the designated hitter and may be treated as such.

**Play 2:** During the pregame meeting with the umpires, team A's head coach turns in a batting lineup

*See "Lineup Language" p. 3*



# Welcome to the 2021 College Baseball Season



**George Drouches**

**NCAA National  
Coordinator of Umpires**

**Ideas are powerful, but not as powerful as habits.**

An important aspect and responsibility of the NCAA Baseball Umpire Program (BUP) is the training and education of officials to increase

knowledge, consistency and standard interpretations across the country.

The information in this 2021 NCAA Baseball Preseason Guide is designed to provide not only information, but clarifications leading into the season. Umpires, always keep this with your development materials, for use in your study and pregame discussions. Coaches, please keep this with your game day materials as a quick reference. In addition, coaches, I strongly urge you to join in our collaborative efforts with the American Baseball Coaches Association (ABCA) leadership team to improve our great game by registering with [www.ncaabaseball.arbitersports.com](http://www.ncaabaseball.arbitersports.com) to access the NCAA's Home Plate page. To aid and be of service with your complimentary Home Plate access, coaches, a quick-and-easy link within your online ABCA Convention registration will be provided.

**People will never follow someone they fear.**

The goal of the national coordinator of umpires has always been to continue to grow the Baseball Umpire Program and to manage and lead the many facets of the program. An excellent, dedicated and passionate staff assists this effort, greatly.

Perception and professionalism

continue to be emphasized. Teaching and mentoring the "NCAA Way" is job number one: inclusive of consistency, accuracy and poise in our dealings on the field – as it is very important for the integrity of our game to select officials for the Championship who are adhering to the NCAA rules, points of emphasis and the NCAA Baseball Umpire Program's protocols; we have high expectations of our officials. The NCAA Division I Baseball Committee and the Baseball Umpire Program are committed to improving umpiring during the regular season, as well as the NCAA Division I Baseball Championship. The continued growth of college baseball makes it imperative that we strive to assign well-trained and qualified umpires to every game throughout the season. The NCAA Baseball Umpire Policies in 2021 will serve as surety and will safeguard these directives. The officiating community handled the rules changes and game-changing challenges in 2019 and 2020 exceptionally well and will continue to be leaders of these impactful changes in 2021.

The former chair of the NCAA Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports will, once again, continue as a contributor to our dedicated Home Plate's Wellness section and the 2021 NCAA Baseball Preseason Guide – reinforcing the BUP's commitment to the well-being of the umpire. The Baseball Umpire Program will build on its steadfast efforts of the shortened 2020 season; with that said, our championship evaluation, selection and assignment procedures need to be continually examined to ensure the best umpires for our championship in the future.

**Align yourself with a team that is talent rich, but ego poor. If you can't find one, then form one.**

The 2021 season will be year one of a new two-year rules cycle. Rule interpretations will continue to be issued by the secretary-rules editor as needed, and an NCAA Rules and Officiating Video will again be produced for 2021.

The 2019 and 2020 secretary-rules editor's interpretations will continue to receive attention [20-second action clock, bat barrel compression testing, bat color requirements, charged conferences, hit by pitch (HBP), between innings timing protocols, expanded video review, pitching position, runner's lane interference points of emphasis (POE) and the suspension penalties] to clarify and educate all to the provisions.

In 2019 and 2020 (albeit halted), NCAA baseball witnessed impactful and game-changing rules that our game had never experienced in recent history. Centralized Video Review will continue throughout the 2021 NCAA Division I Baseball Championship. TD Ameritrade Park Omaha (TDAPO) has also installed visible 20-second action clocks for the 2021 NCAA Men's College World Series (CWS).

**The secret to high capacity leadership is knowing how to change personal criticism into personal improvement.**

During 2020's first four weeks of competition, the NCAA Incident/Ejection/Suspension Reports were down 60 percent — one can only speculate if this trend were to continue if the full season was played, but I believe the unsettling behavior of the past several years subsided during this time due to the fact that whether a coach or an official, when you are in control of your emotions, one can communicate in a professional manner.

Umpires, use the formal warning whenever possible; discipline yourself to be credible and concise in

*See "Welcome" p. 3*

## Welcome

*Continued from p. 2*

your communication; and remember your true role of managing the game.

Finally, as we move to 2021, let's collaboratively build on this refreshing decline in ejections and suspensions; and in respect to on-field health and safety protocols: players and coaches should maintain physical distancing from all umpires and opposing players whenever possible and not leave their positions to argue with umpires, or come within six feet of an umpire or opposing player for the purpose of argument.

### The only way home is forward.

Expanded Video Review for 2021 includes one change: If a coach initiates a video-review challenge and the original call is overturned,

the coach will keep the challenge. I encourage all coaches, administrators and umpires to review the 2021 NCAA Video Review Regulations posted on Home Plate. This technology has brought much added value to the umpire development vision and plan of the NCAA Baseball Umpire Program.

### The talent of a great leader isn't his or her talent, it is that person's ability to spot talent and collide with it.

Consistency of mechanics, increased teamwork, consistency of rule interpretations and improved situation management will continue to be important goals for future years with the desire to get every call accurate and correct.

Wishing all the stakeholders of our great game of NCAA college baseball the very best in 2021. □

**Play 3:** Following a collision between batter-runner Walker and first baseman Nelson in the third inning, team B's coach removes Nelson from the game to receive evaluation for a possible concussion and replaces him with Davis. After receiving clearance from the team's head trainer, Nelson (a) comes to the plate in the eighth inning in his original position in the batting lineup, or (b) in a different position than the one he occupied at the start of the game. Nelson singles, and the team B coach (c) replaces him with Davis as a pinch-runner, or (d) sends Davis to the plate as the next batter. Ruling 3: Legal in (a) and (c), and not legal in (b) and (d). In (c), once Davis pinch-runs for Nelson, the latter is done and cannot return to the game.

### Batter Interference/Uncaught Third Strike (7-11-h Note)

On a third strike, not caught by the catcher, if the batter-runner clearly hinders the catcher in his attempt to field the ball, whether the action is intentional or not, the batter-runner is out, the ball is dead and all other runners return to the bases they occupied at the time of the pitch regardless of the number of outs.

If the pitched ball deflects off the catcher or umpire and subsequently touches the batter-runner, it is not considered interference unless, in the judgment of the umpire, the batter-runner clearly hinders the catcher in his attempt to field the ball.

The change is intended to simplify the administration of the rule regardless of the number of outs and whether the batter-runner's action is intentional or not.

**Play 4:** With a runner on first base and one out, B3 strikes out on a pitch in the dirt. The ball bounces off the

*See "Lineup Language" p. 4*

## Lineup Language

*Continued from p. 1*

featuring nine batters. Jones is listed as the starting pitcher. In the fourth inning, during what should be Jones' second plate appearance, Smith comes to the plate. In the next half-inning, Jones again takes the mound. Ruling 2: This is legal. Jones began the game as the pitcher and the designated hitter. Once Smith batted, he became the designated hitter, while Jones remained the pitcher.

### Re-entry (5-5-k)

The NCAA has established a method of permissible re-entry for a player suspected of receiving a concussion during the course of a game.

A player who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion must be immediately removed and receive

appropriate medical evaluation. However, the player may return to his original spot in the lineup if he is cleared by an appropriate medical professional.

A player may only re-enter the game one time. The temporary replacement player may again participate in the game as a substitute in the same lineup spot only.

If the temporary replacement player is substituted for, that player may not re-enter the game.

If a team has no remaining eligible players, a starter or substitute who has previously participated in the game may replace the injured player.

The change is intended to improve player safety, giving coaches a pathway to have a possibly concussed player evaluated and be able to return to the lineup.

### Acknowledgments

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## Lineup Language

*Continued from p. 3*

catcher and into the path of B3, who takes two steps and inadvertently kicks the stationary ball away from the catcher. Ruling 4: B3 is out, the ball is dead and R1 must return to first base.

**Play 5:** With a runner on second base and one out, B3 strikes out on a pitch in the dirt. The ball bounces off the catcher and into B3. The ball falls to the ground, where the catcher picks it up, drops it and fails to make any additional play as R2 reaches third base and B3 reaches first base. Ruling 5: R2 is safe at third base and B3 is safe at first. This is not considered interference.

### Interference/Thrown Bat (7-11-n)

If a whole bat is thrown into fair or foul territory, whether intentionally or not, and it interferes with a defensive player attempting to make a play on the ball, interference shall be called.

The change is intended to establish clearer guidance whether interference has occurred in situations of a fielder attempting to make a play when a bat is thrown in foul territory.

**Play 6:** B1 hits a pop-up near the plate and throws his bat to the ground (a) in fair territory or (b) in foul territory. The opposing catcher, while trying to make a play on the ball, steps on the bat and falls, and the ball falls to the ground next to him. Ruling 6: B1 is called out for interference in both (a) and (b).

### Fight Rule (5-16-c)

Any team personnel, other than coaches, who leave the dugouts or bullpens to enter the field at the time of a potential altercation or fight shall be ejected. Ejections would carry a one-game suspension, unless the individual physically participates in a fight.

The change is intended to establish a method and penalty for players who exacerbate altercations

and delay the game by leaving the dugout or bullpen at the time of an altercation, in order to prevent further escalations and unsportsmanlike conduct.

### Foul Tip (2-37)

The definition for a foul tip has been updated to read, "A batted ball that goes sharp and direct from the bat to the catcher and is legally caught. It is not a foul tip unless caught, and any foul tip that is caught is a strike, and the ball is in play."

The change clarifies that a foul tip no longer has to first touch the catcher's hand or glove before being legally caught. By interpretation the ball must be caught by the catcher.

**Play 7:** With a 1-1 count and R1 stealing on the pitch, B2 swings and makes contact with the baseball. The ball ricochets off F2's mask, and (a) F2 catches it, or (b) F1 catches it. Ruling 7: This is a foul tip and the ball remains live in (a). In (b), it is a foul ball.

### Penalty for a Foreign Substance (9-2-e)

A stronger penalty has been established for using a foreign substance on the ball, and/or having one on his person or in his possession. The penalty is the pitcher being ejected from the game.

If the pitcher expectorates on his hand, ball or glove or rubs the ball on his glove, person or clothing and, in the judgment of the umpire, the pitcher did not intend to alter the characteristics of the baseball, the umpire may warn the pitcher in lieu of an ejection. However, if the pitcher persists in violating the rule, the umpire shall eject the pitcher from the game.

### Force-Play-Slide Rule (8-4)

The updated rule clarifies the force-play-slide rule does not apply to the batter-runner at first base, and also establishes the runner is not required to slide until in the vicinity of the base.

### Pitch Strikes Animal (6-1-g)

The rule has been re-written to read, "If a thrown or batted ball that remains in live-ball territory accidentally hits a spectator, authorized on-field personnel or an animal, the ball is live." There is also a note added that reads, "If a pitched ball strikes a bird in flight or other animal on the playing field, the pitch is nullified, and play shall be resumed with the previous count."

The changes are intended to distinguish the difference between a thrown or batted ball inadvertently hitting an animal or authorized on-field personnel and a pitched ball striking an animal.

### Play or Attempted Play (2-67-b)

An additional definition for the term "play or attempted play" has been added to identify that it shall be interpreted as a legitimate effort by a defensive player who has possession of the ball to retire a runner. The fact the runner is not out is not relevant, and a fake or feint to throw shall not be deemed a play or an attempted play.

The rationale for the new wording is there are references throughout the playing rules regarding when a play has occurred, but no definition of what defines a play.

### One Foot in Catcher's Box (5-4-a, 9-3-i)

The rule has been modified to state the catcher must have at least one foot in the catcher's box until the pitcher begins the pitching motion.

The change is intended to provide a more enforceable playing rule for umpires depending on where the catcher sets up to receive a pitch.

### The Windup (9-1-a)

The first sentence of the rule has been changed to read, "The pitcher shall stand facing the batter, his pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate and other foot free."

In the windup position, a pitcher is permitted to have his "free" foot on the rubber, in front of the rubber, behind the rubber or off the side of ▶



Any team personnel, other than coaches, who leave the dugouts or bullpens to enter the field at the time of a potential altercation or fight shall be ejected, according to a rule change made at the NCAA level for the 2021 season.

- ▶ the rubber. The pitcher may not take a second step toward home plate with either foot in his delivery of the pitch.

### The Set (9-1-b)

The first sentence of the rule has been changed to read, "The set position shall be indicated when the pitcher stands facing the batter with his pivot foot in contact with, and his other foot in front of, the pitcher's plate, holding the ball in both hands in front of his body and coming to a complete stop."

An additional paragraph has been added to read, "With a runner or runners on base, a pitcher will be presumed to be pitching from the set position if he stands with his pivot foot in contact with and parallel to the pitcher's plate, and his other foot in front of the pitcher's plate, unless he notifies the umpire that he will be pitching from the windup position

under such circumstances prior to the beginning of an at-bat. A pitcher will be permitted to notify the umpire that he is pitching from the windup position within an at-bat only in the event of (1) substitutions by the offensive team; or (2) immediately upon the advancement of one or more baserunners advance, but before delivery of the next pitch)."

### Rules for Scoreboards, Video and Audio (Appendix B, A-4 and Appendix B, A-4)

An unlimited number of replays may now be shown at regular speed or slow motion only after a play is under video review and no replays shall be shown once a decision has been made by the umpires and/or replay official.

Also, a stadium videoboard may now play live video upon contact with the bat after the pitch. Live

video must cease once a student-athlete enters the batter's box and may resume upon contact with the bat after the pitch.

### Getting the Call Right with Video Review, Coach's Challenge (Appendix E-2)

If a coach's challenge is successful in overturning a call, the coach will retain the challenge to use if needed later in the game.

### Visual Inspection/Bat Testing (Appendix G)

The new Appendix G includes guidelines for NCAA bat testing beginning with the 2021 season.

Divisions II and III will be exempt from the barrel compression testing requirement of the bat testing process until the 2022 season. All bats used in competition must undergo a visual inspection and be marked as approved with a destructible sticker. □





# Flashback: 2020 Rules Review

In their ongoing quest to improve pace of play, the NCAA Baseball Rules Committee and the Playing Rules Oversight Panel (PROP) approved the expanded use of a 20-second action clock in all NCAA divisions starting with the 2020 season.

Not to be confused with a pitch clock, the action clock mandates that, once the home-plate umpire signals play, or the pitcher has possession of the ball in the circle surrounding the pitcher's rubber, the catcher is in the catcher's box and the batter is in the batter's box, the pitcher shall be allowed 20 seconds to begin the activity preceding each pitch. The pitcher does not necessarily have to release the ball within 20 seconds; however, the pitcher must begin his windup motion or otherwise begin the motion to come set in order to comply with the rule.

Upon a first violation, the pitcher shall be warned by the umpire. There is one warning per pitcher. Each subsequent violation shall result in the award of a ball to the batter without the pitcher having to deliver the pitch. The ball is dead and no runners may advance, unless the ball awarded by the umpire is the batter's fourth and the batter is entitled to advance to first.

Conversely, batters shall enter and remain in the batter's box in accordance with rule 7-1-d and not delay entry to gain an undue advantage. If the batter does not enter the box and become alert to the pitcher with five or more seconds remaining on the action clock, the batter will be in violation and the umpire shall award a strike without the pitcher having to deliver the pitch. Again, the ball is dead and no runners may advance.

Prior to this season, the rule – found in Appendix F of the NCAA rulebook – was applicable whenever the bases were unoccupied. It now includes situations when there are baserunners, with the idea of not allowing the game to bog down and become an actionless contest once



If there is no visible play clock on the field, NCAA umpires will need to use a stopwatch to adjudicate the 20-second action clock during the 2021 season. Travis Reininger, Brighton, Colo.

BOB MESSINA

**UPON A FIRST VIOLATION, THE PITCHER SHALL BE WARNED BY THE UMPIRE. THERE IS ONE WARNING PER PITCHER. EACH SUBSEQUENT VIOLATION SHALL RESULT IN THE AWARD OF A BALL TO THE BATTER WITHOUT THE PITCHER HAVING TO DELIVER THE PITCH.**

there are runners on base.

"That's a continuous concern in baseball in general, not just at our level. It's not even so much the time of the game, but that there is continuous action in the game," said Randy Bruns, the NCAA's secretary-rules editor for baseball. "(The action clock) should not only reduce overall game times, but just as important, keep the game going. The whole idea is at least there's some activity that is going on."

The rules committee actually approved the rule change in July 2018, with a second component that called for a visible time clock. However, PROP did not pass the two rules in conjunction, citing cost implications, particularly for Division II and Division III programs. Instead, a visible time clock is recommended, but not mandated. In ballparks where there is no visible clock, a member of the umpiring crew must use an on-field timing device to maintain compliance.

"Of course the concern is, how am I going to do that with a runner on base and still watch for other important things?" Bruns said. "It's not going to be perfect. But it will be certainly better than it was before. I think it will have a real positive impact once people get used to it."

As with the 2019 season, when a rule targeting the time between innings took center stage, NCAA baseball officials want the action clock rule enforced, visible clock or not. Bruns used the example of an expired play clock in football or shot clock in basketball to emphasize this point.

"This is not a guideline," said Bruns, echoing the same language he used previously. "These time limits are required. These are not guidelines. These are things that need to be administered."

"Is it going to be perfect in every situation, if your attention is drawn to some other part of a play? No. But it's going to be much more consistent if we make sure that all the umpires are focused on it, and so are the coaches. The coaches and players are going to adjust, it's just a matter of they've never had to before."

"It's probably going to lead more people to use some level of a visible clock. Again, sometimes you have to walk before you run. We have to get some experience with this before we realize how that is exactly going to take place."

#### **Bat colors/testing**

Two additional significant changes in NCAA baseball for the 2020 season involved bats.

The first change involved the color of the bat barrel. It must now be of a predominantly contrasting color to the color of the baseball between the 18-inch mark and the end cap (1-12-b.7). The rationale is to help alleviate safety concerns created for fielders having trouble picking up the ball off the bat. There is a list available at [ncaa.org/playingrules](http://ncaa.org/playingrules) of bats no longer approved by color.

The second change involved bat barrel compression testing. Prior to each regular-season series or single date of competition, all bats used in competition must pass the barrel ring test and barrel compression testing. PROP approved the rule in 2017 but delayed its implementation due to cost concerns related to purchasing the necessary equipment. The rule went into effect at the Division I level for 2020, and the barrel compression test will be required at the Division II and Division III levels in 2022. □

## **New clocks find home inside TD Ameritrade**

With the adoption of a 20-second action clock across all levels of college baseball for the 2021 season, efforts are now underway to help umpires in the compliance effort.

Three visible clocks were installed at TD Ameritrade Park Omaha, home of the College World Series, in the spring of 2020.

"The 20-second action clock, whether visible or not, will have dramatic pace-of-play momentum in 2021," said George Drouches, the NCAA national coordinator of umpires. "This momentum doesn't require something monumental (from umpires). Approach the pace-of-play changes with passion and we will be fine."

In ballparks where there are no visible clocks, umpires will be tasked with keeping the action clock on the field via a stopwatch or another appropriate timepiece.

With the clocks now in place at the site of the NCAA Division I baseball championship, Drouches is hopeful there will be a trickle-down effect to allow players, coaches and umpires to all become more familiar and comfortable with the action clock. He likened the required equipment adjustment to when other NCAA sports adopted shot and play clocks and mandated their physical presence in stadiums and arenas.

"I believe NCAA baseball will increase the presence of visible clocks, across all divisions, and follow in the same timely manner in which NCAA football and NCAA basketball did in implementing their respective visible shot clocks and play clocks," Drouches said. □



# Test Yourself

In each of the following, decide which answer(s) is/are correct using the 2021 NCAA rules.

**1. With a runner on first and one out, B3 hits a sharp ground ball that is deflected by F1 toward F4. As F4 is attempting to field the ball, he is contacted by R1, who is running directly toward second base.**

- The ball is live and in play. The contact with the fielder was unavoidable on the part of R1.
- Obstruction by F4. Once the pitcher had an opportunity to field the ball, the fielder is no longer protected and any contact between him and a runner is deemed his responsibility. R1 is placed at second and B3 is awarded first.
- Time should be called after the play and a ruling made based on what would have happened had the pitcher not deflected the ball.
- R1 is out for interference. If a batted ball is deflected by the pitcher and another fielder has a legitimate play to retire a runner, the fielder is protected and a collision by a baserunner results in interference. B3 is awarded first.

**2. Team A's head coach is ejected for arguing balls and strikes after a warning. An assistant coach comes out to the plate umpire the next half inning and tells him that he will be taking over the team. Several innings later, this substitute head coach is ejected for unsportsmanlike conduct directed at the plate umpire. What is his penalty?**

- He will serve a one-game suspension in addition to the ejection.
- Since he was the substitute head coach, he will serve a four-game suspension in addition to the penalty.
- It depends on governing authority policy.

**3. With runners on first and third and two outs, B5 hits a slow ground ball back to F1. F1 fields the ball and throws it to F2. R3 is ruled safe on the tag play at home, but F2 quickly makes a play on B5 going to first and B5 is out.**

- Score the run as this is an intervening play.
- Do not allow any runs to score.

**4. B3 hits a high pop-up between home plate and first base. The pitcher, catcher and first baseman all move to catch the fly ball. The umpire determines F3 will field the fly ball. B3 runs into F1 as he advances toward first.**

- Call obstruction, leave the ball in play and award B3 first base.
- Call interference on F1.
- Call obstruction, immediately call "time" and award B3 first base.



**If a pitcher balks during a pickoff attempt, the ball is not immediately dead, and several interesting situations can still unfold for an umpire. See question No. 19 for an example.**

- Call obstruction and leave the ball in play. If the ball is caught, B3 is out. If the fair ball is dropped, call "time" and award bases.

would have obtained had interference not occurred.

**5. B1 requests and is granted time to talk to his third-base coach. While they are conferring, the defensive coach motions for the pitcher to meet him at the foul line. As the offensive conference concludes, the defensive coach returns to his dugout.**

- Only a defensive conference is charged.
- Only an offensive conference is charged.
- Both offensive and defensive conferences are charged.
- Neither an offensive nor defensive conference is charged.

**6. With runners on first and second and one out, B4 gets a base hit to the outfield. R2 is held up late by the third-base coach as he rounds third trying to score. He slips as he tries to stop, contacts the third-base coach, then gets up and scrambles back to third. The umpire judges the contact was accidental.**

- It is not coach interference when the contact is accidental. The ball is live and in play.
- This is coach interference. The ball is dead immediately and R2 is declared out. All other runners return to the last legally touched base at the time of the interference.
- This is coach interference. It is a delayed dead ball. After the play, R2 is declared out and the other runners remain at the bases they obtained during the play.
- This is coach interference. The ball is dead immediately, R2 is declared out and other runners are awarded the base they

**7. With R3 on third and one out, B3 hits a pop-up foul down the third-base line. F5 makes the catch near his dugout and then steps inside with both feet.**

- The batter is out and R3 scores.
- The batter is out and R3 stays at third.
- The ball is live if it was stated in the ground rules "catch and carry" into the dugout was legal if the fielder doesn't fall down.
- The catch is disallowed. It's a foul ball.

**8. With a runner on first and no outs, F2 interferes with B2, who is still able to hit the ball for a base hit to the outfield. R1 misses second on his way to third while B2 reaches first safely. The defense appeals R1 missed second and is upheld. The offensive head coach comes to the plate umpire and states that he elects to take the catcher's interference penalty.**

- Do not allow the head coach's election to take catcher's interference and the play stands.
- Enforce the catcher's interference, and runners should be placed at first and second.

**9. With the bases loaded and two outs in the top of the seventh inning, the pitching coach changes pitchers from Jones to Smith. As he is walking back toward the dugout and is in foul territory, he turns around and heads back out toward the mound to visit Smith.**

- Do not allow the visit because the pitching coach was in foul territory.



- b. Allow the visit if the team and/or coach has not used its maximum number of free trips to the mound.
- c. Do not allow the visit because this is the second visit with the same batter.
- d. Do not allow the visit and warn the pitching coach that he will be removed from the game if he continues to the mound.

**10. The starting pitcher is removed from the game in the fifth inning and is sitting in the dugout. A couple of innings later, he shouts an offensive comment to the plate umpire after a play at home plate and is ejected. What is his penalty?**

- a. It is treated the same as any other ejection.
- b. Ejection plus one additional game suspension.
- c. Ejection plus suspension for two additional games.
- d. Ejection plus a four-game suspension.

**11. With the bases loaded and two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning, the score is tied. B9 is hit by the pitch and is awarded first base. R3 legally touches home and scores and B9 legally advances to and touches first. R2 started toward third but went to join the celebration near first before he touched third base. The umpires should:**

- a. Call R2 out for making a travesty of the game and continue the game.
- b. Declare the game over. The run scores as only B9 needed to go to first and R3 touch home.
- c. Call R2 out for abandoning his effort to run the bases and continue the game.
- d. Call R2 out if the defense properly appeals third base and continue the game.

**12. With a runner on first, B1 hits a line drive at F3, who dives but can only trap the ball for "no catch." R1, believing there is a catch, returns to first. F3 tags first base and then R1 (who is touching first).**

- a. Both runners were forced to advance during the play, so both runners are out.
- b. B1 is out, removing the force against R1, who is safe.
- c. R1 is out for interfering with the play by running the wrong direction. B1 is out on the tag of first for a double play.
- d. R1 is out as soon as he touches first, because B1 was entitled to the base. The ball is dead, and B1 is placed at first.

**13. With runners on second and third and one out, B4 hits a liner into left center. R2 and R3 score, but R2 misses third base. B4 gets to second base, but misses first. The defense appeals both infractions. They first appeal B4 missing first base and then appeal R2 missing third base.**

- a. R3 scores.
- b. No runs score.

**14. With a runner on first, no outs and a 1-0 count on B2, the pitcher fails to come to a complete stop and is called for a balk. His pitch is wild and eludes F2, going all the way to the backstop. R1 attempts to advance to third and is thrown out.**

- a. B2 and all runners did not advance at least one base. Return R1 to second base.
- b. The balk award is always one base. Return R1 to second base.
- c. Immediately call "time" when the pitcher balks.
- d. The play on R1 stands and he is out. The balk is still "acknowledged" and the count remains 1-0 on the batter.

**15. The batter hits a deep, high fly ball into the right-field corner. F9 gets under the ball at the fence near the foul pole, standing in foul territory. F9 jumps and touches the ball with his glove while the ball is over fair territory. The ball deflects off his glove and travels over the fence on the foul side of the foul pole.**

- a. Home run. The ball was fair and traveled over the fence in flight.
- b. Foul ball. The fielder was in foul territory when he touched the ball, and the ball was foul when it went over the fence.
- c. Ground-rule double. The ball was fair but traveled over the fence over foul territory.

**16. The head coach is upset with the plate umpire's performance and has made repeated comments from the dugout. The umpire has stayed calm, responded to a question, given an official warning and the coach is finally ejected. The ejecting umpire has walked away from the coach's location, but the coach charges out of the dugout to argue again with the umpire. What is the penalty?**

- a. There is no additional penalty unless there is physical contact.
- b. One-game suspension added to the ejection.
- c. Two-game suspension added to the ejection.
- d. It depends on governing authority policy.

**17. With runners on second and third and no outs, B3 bunts for a suicide squeeze. The ball goes in the air up the first-base line with both runners moving on the pitch. As F3 moves to make the catch, he collides with B3, who was not trying to interfere.**

- a. Dead ball; interference on B3. Since the interference was not intentional, only B3 is called out. All other runners return to their previous base.
- b. No interference. The batter did not intentionally interfere.
- c. Dead ball; interference on B3. B3 is out and so is R2 for the interference of his teammate. R3 returns to third.
- d. Dead ball; interference on B3. Because a double play is likely, both B3 and R3 are out; R2 returns to second.

**18. With R2 on second and no outs, B2 bunts and is running to first in fair territory illegally outside the running lane. F2 fields the bunt and throws to first. The ball just barely touches B2's shoulder. F3 flinches, but catches the ball for an out at first. He then throws home to make a play on R2, who is safe.**

- a. B2 is out for running lane interference, R2 scores.
- b. B2 is out due to the tag of first base, R2 scores.
- c. The ball became dead when B2 interfered with F3 taking the throw. R2 goes back to second base on the interference.

**19. With a runner on first and one out, F1 balks as he attempts to pick off R1. F3 misses the throw and the ball rolls along the fence in live-ball territory. R1 is able to score on the play, but misses second. The ball is returned to the infield and F6 immediately makes an appeal at second.**

- a. The balk is enforced and R1 is returned to second.
- b. The balk is enforced and R1 is out.
- c. The balk is ignored and R1 is returned to second.
- d. The balk is ignored and R1 is out.

**20. With a runner on first stealing on the pitch, B1 hits a ground ball to F6, who throws to second, but R1 is safe at second. F4 then tries to throw out B1, who has not reached first base, but the ball gets by the first baseman and goes into the dugout, out of play.**

- a. R1 stays at second, B1 stays at first.
- b. R1 to third, B1 to second.
- c. R1 scores, B1 to second.
- d. R1 scores, B1 to third.

## ANSWERS

1. d – 8-5-d Note 2
2. a – 2-26-g
3. b – 5-6-c Exc. 1
4. d – 8-3-e-2
5. c – 6-5-f-4, 9-4-a-1
6. a – 3-3-e Pen., 8-5-f
7. a – 6-1-d
8. a – 8-2-e-1, 8-3-o-3 Note 3
9. b – 9-4-a-1
10. d – 2-26-e
11. b – 5-8-d Note
12. b – 2-33, 8-5-j Exc.
13. a – 5-6-c
14. d – 9-3 Pen. 3, Note 3
15. c – 8-3-o-2, 2-27
16. c – 5-15-a-4, 2-26-h
17. d – 8-5-e
18. c – 7-11-p
19. b – 9-3 Pen. 2 Note
20. c – 8-3-o-3 Note 1

# Q&A: Division II and Division III Coordinators



**Scott Taylor**

Division II Umpire Coordinator



**Don Umland**

Division III Umpire Coordinator

**What did you see during the abbreviated 2020 season that umpires were doing really well?**

**Taylor:** The shutdown of the season happened so early and we were really just getting into the process of evaluating postseason umpires. I think I'd have to answer this question by saying that I was pleased to see so many umpires taking part in camps in the last offseason to prepare and work hard at honing their craft. Umpires are starting to recognize that the competition for postseason spots, and the evaluation of those positions, has really gotten serious over the last couple of years. The umpires that truly want to be in the postseason seem to be doing

more to get themselves in the mix. As a coordinator that pleases me immensely.

**Umland:** The abbreviated season certainly made it difficult to get a broad assessment of the landscape in Division III college baseball. In fact, very few schools even got their season started. What I was able to ascertain in my limited observation was how strike zones were being enforced as written in the rulebook. I was also happy to see how many umpires came into the season physically ready to umpire. Many of the officials looked like they had been preparing themselves for the rigors of the season. Lastly, I saw a great deal of professional

conduct amongst those I observed. Situations were handled with a sense of calm and the use of proper verbiage as it relates to warnings, etc.

**Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many Division I conferences are cutting back on the number of umpires they will be using on the field in 2021. How does this trickle down to the Division II and Division III levels when it comes to assigning umpires?**

**Taylor:** I think the results of this work in two different ways. First of all, we will have a reduction in Division II the same as Division I on the number of umpires to ►

► be used on the field in many conferences. We have worked really hard to get to three-umpire crews over the past couple of years at the Division II level. COVID definitely set that progress back and it will take some time to get back to where we were pre-pandemic. That being said, I think the quality of umpires in our postseason pool in Division II will increase dramatically because of the lack of assignments at the Division I level. Some of those umpires are going to come back to Division II to work and I'm excited about giving some of those umpires opportunities at our level.

**Umland:** I think the individual conference assignors will be tasked to put the best umpires on the field based on what is available to them. Staff reductions (or freezes) at the Division I level may open up some dates to those officials which could make them available to a Division II or Division III assignor. However, those individuals have to be willing to work for those conferences. An assignor has to be fair to his existing conference umpires (core group) and has to do a bit of a balancing act as it comes to assignments. As for postseason, my selections are determined by whom the individual conferences approve and recommend. I don't get the liberty to pick and choose initially. The selection process maintains a level of integrity under the existing format, which I am quite comfortable with.

**Which of the rule/mechanic changes implemented for the 2021 season do you expect to have the biggest impact for umpires at your level of play?**

**Taylor:** I really don't think that any rules changes will have a huge impact on our umpires. I think a

lot of guys get worked up a little bit too much over rules changes. I think that rules changes — especially when it comes to safety-related changes — are important and necessary to continue to tweak in college baseball. I think that the baseball rules committee will always continue to look to make safety a priority in NCAA baseball. But if you are going to hold my feet to the fire and make me pick one, I would say probably the windup and set positions for a pitcher.

**Umland:** I was originally going to say the changes to the windup and set. They are both relevant and I hope the changes ultimately lead to a consistent format for years to come. For me, I would say that the re-entry rule will prove to have an impact. Obviously, player safety is a priority. This rule allows for a small college (which may have limited player options) to have some flexibility with its roster and still have the opportunity to return a starter into the lineup if medically cleared.

**What is the No. 1 attribute you are looking for when determining whether an umpire is capable of working at your level or being promoted to your level?**

**Taylor:** Leadership. When it comes to working postseason, I think that all umpires that are chosen have the ability to work at that level technically. When I say that, I mean ball, strike, safe and out. The thing that sets one umpire apart from another is leadership. You have to be able to lead people. If you can't do that, it is very hard for me to choose you for postseason.

**Umland:** First of all, my assigning responsibilities begin and end with the regionals and championships.

Those who are nominated have demonstrated the ability to handle situations on and off the field accordingly. The evaluation process includes myself, site evaluators and crew chiefs. In terms of attributes, I would have to say consistency is No. 1 in my book. That pertains to base and plate work and how that is maintained throughout a game. Equally important is how an umpire handles a situation when the heat is on! Do they maintain an even temperament? Do they follow protocol as it relates to handling situations? How do they perform after the situation is over and the game is back to being played? □

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# Umpires Need Handle on ‘New Normal’

Though we all had hoped that life would return to normal by the time spring baseball arrives, that is not likely to occur. Though the new normal is not normal we should be able to conduct a season, possibly with some fans, aided by the fact that we play in a large outdoor venue. The conduct of our seasonal planning, our in-game protocols and our after-game socializing will all have to be different if we are to be successful and safe.



**Dr. Douglas J. Ramos**

Former Chair of the NCAA Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports

As I write this column today, we have some states with positive COVID test rates of more than 25 percent, and though it seems we are making some progress on the medical front, we really are not being socially responsible enough in many areas. As the great Kareem Abdul-Jabbar eloquently stated, “Being responsible role models during a worldwide pandemic that has killed nearly a million people isn’t about laws; it’s about concern and respect for the lives of others, especially the others who can’t afford to miss work or don’t have access to good healthcare.”

As we think about control of this pandemic, it requires a lot of little steps and each one of these adds a layer of added protection. I like to use a “Swiss cheese” model where the more layers you put on, the more the holes are plugged up. Thus, masking plus distancing plus hand hygiene plus testing all adds up. One of the biggest areas of confusion is the 6-foot/15-minute rule that is always espoused. The first thing to do is not adopt this as hard fact. The fact is that one minute at a close distance may be bad or one hour at 30 feet in a closed space may be bad; it is just all over the place.

## **A few points of information:**

**Vaccines:** Many companies are

developing vaccines, but none of these will be in place or have an effect on the 2021 baseball season. It is hopeful that vaccines will be 50 percent effective, but will still need to overcome distribution and acceptance by the population. The other unknown is how long immunity will last.

**Testing:** The biggest advance as of Fall 2020 is the evolution of rapid testing for coronavirus and the drop in price for some of these tests. The problem currently is that the availability of these tests is restricted either because of governmental control or lack of production capabilities to meet the demand. Rest assured that in the conduct of the baseball season, rapid testing or some testing is likely to be required by all umpires and officials either by state requirement, conference requirement or institutional requirement.

**Logistics:** Logistical issues will play large in the planning of umpires’ schedules. The days of going from one city to the other on successive days is likely not to occur, due to either quarantine laws regarding traveling from state to state or the inability to confirm a negative test within 48-72 hours before you are allowed to officiate a game. It is likely 48-72 hours will have to pass between a series or games that are in different areas or different institutions. It is likely all players and umpires will have to come to the games and proceed directly to the field, and no use of locker rooms may be the rule.

**Social:** Perhaps this is the hardest thing for all of us to deal with. Sampling of data from healthcare systems shows that, of those people infected, they have been in a bar 41 percent of the time. So, for the most part my recommendation is no bars under any circumstances, and restaurants probably should be avoided as well. This is a big concern and my recommendation is that all sign a code of conduct to adhere to this; I have even advised institutions in some sports to make this contractually binding and a cause for termination, I feel that strongly

about it. Also, keep in mind that you carry risk back to your family and they relay risk to you that you carry as you move about the country.

**Mental health:** Among young people the incidence of anxiety and depression is almost four-fold of what it was one year ago. It has also been estimated the number of deaths at this time related to suicide and substance abuse caused by the stress of the pandemic equals the number of deaths from the virus itself. That is 200,000 deaths plus, and that is a sobering thought. Please reach out for help if you see things spiraling, and if you sense a colleague struggling, ask the tough questions of them. You may be saving their life, their marriage or their career. Adding to all of this are the economic issues with underemployment and knowing all are likely to make less money this year than they did the last. Hopefully, baseball schedules will not be as curtailed as they have been in other sports.

**Travel:** Airline travel is not precluded, but it does carry some added risks -- certainly masking and limited touching of surfaces goes a long way to mitigate risks on airplanes. Airline filtration systems tend to be fairly effective at removing the virus and most of the cases of airline infections occurred with long trips and no masking early in the pandemic. Needless to say, the marked decrease in flight options will impact the logistics we mentioned above, so think more regional this year for a multitude of reasons.

In summary, “hope” is not enough to get us through this pandemic and as the Dalai Lama said, “there are times we need to do more than pray.” We must be responsible now more than ever and please don’t be dismissive of the seriousness of what we are going through. I, like you, miss so much of what we once had in and out of sports and particularly baseball. We will swing for the fences again but let us not strike out in the process. Be well all. □

# NCAA Misconduct Penalties

Type of Offense	Offender	Consequence for First Offense	Consequence for Second Offense	Consequence for Third Offense	Rule Ref.
Unsportsmanlike conduct or language directed toward an umpire or an opponent	Assistant coach, player or team personnel	Ejection from present contest plus a one game suspension	Ejection from present contest plus a three game suspension by the same individual in the same season	Same as second offense	2-26-f
Unsportsmanlike conduct or language directed toward an umpire or an opponent	Head coach	Ejection from present contest - no suspension	Same as first offense	Same as first offense	2-26-f
Unsportsmanlike conduct or language directed toward an umpire or an opponent	Player whose last listed position is that of a pitcher	Ejection from present contest plus a four-game suspension	Same as first offense	Same as first offense	2-26-e
Game Misconduct—removing team from the field; refusing to continue	Head coach	Ejection from the present contest plus a two-game (2) suspension	Same as first offense	Same as first offense	5-15-b
Prolonged or continued arguing, offensive language or excessive expressions directed at an umpire or game official after an ejection	Any participant	Two-game suspension added to the present accumulative total for applicable suspension penalties	Same as first offense	Same as first offense	2-26-h; 5-15-a (4)
Fighting	Any participant	Ejection plus a four-game suspension	Ejection plus a suspension from the team's next five contests	Ejection plus a suspension for the remainder of the season, including postseason competition	5-16-a
Physical abuse of participants or umpires	Any participant includes head coach	Ejection plus a four-game suspension	Ejection plus a suspension from the team's next five contests	Ejection plus a suspension for the remainder of the season, including postseason competition	5-16-b
Leaving dugout or bullpen at the time of a potential altercation or fight	Player(s) or team personnel (excluding coaches)	Ejection from present contest plus a one-game suspension	Same as first offense	Same as first offense	5-16-c
Leaving position to participate in a fight	Any participant	Four-game suspension after the ejection	Suspended for the remainder of the season	N/A	5-16-c, Penalty (1), (5)
Intentionally throwing at a batter	Pitcher, or pitcher and head coach	Ejection plus a four-game suspension. The head coach is not ejected if no warning is given. If a warning has been given, the head coach is ejected from that game and suspended for one game	Ejection plus an eight-game suspension. The head coach is not ejected if no warning has been given. If a warning has been given, the head coach is ejected and suspended for one game	Ejection plus a suspension for the remainder of the season, including postseason. If no warning is given, the head coach is not ejected. If a warning is issued, the head coach is ejected and suspended for one game	5-16-d, (1), (2), (3)
Verbal abuse/bench jockeying	Any participant or game personnel other than head coach	After a warning, offender is ejected for that game plus a one game suspension	When verbal abuse/bench jockeying continues, head coach is ejected (no suspension). All others ejection plus one game suspension	Same as second offense	5-17
Failure to leave sight and sound of the playing field and grandstands after an ejection	Any participant	Three-game suspension added to any penalties already accumulated	Same as first offense	Same as first offense	3-6-d, Note 2 and 3
Collision rule	Player	Ejection from the present contest. One game suspension	Same as first offense	Same as first offense	8-7
Ejection for tobacco use	Player or team personnel and head coach	Ejected from present contest plus one game suspension for everyone other than the head coach	Same as first offense	Same as first offense	3-11
Post-participation ejection for unsportsmanlike conduct	Assistant coach, player (other than a pitcher) or team personnel	Ejection from next contest plus a one game suspension. These two games will be added to any other applicable penalties for other offenses	Ejection from next scheduled contest plus a three game suspension for a total of four games. These four games will be added to any other applicable penalties for other offenses	Same as second offense	2-26-c; Appendix D
Post-participation ejection	Head coach	Ejected from team's next game-No Suspension	Same as first offense	Same as first offense	2-26-c; Appendix D
Post-participation ejection for a pitcher	Player whose last listed position is that of a pitcher	A total suspension of four games	Same as first offense	Same as first offense	2-26-e
Possession or use of any foreign substance or moisture applied to the hand or fingers, or do anything to deface the ball	Pitcher	Ejection plus four-game suspension	Ejection plus four-game suspension	Ejection plus four-game suspension	9-2-e

Note 1: It is the responsibility of the institution's Head Coach and Director of Athletics to administer and enforce any suspension penalties.

Note 2: Suspension penalties, regardless of the number, shall be served during the offending team's next scheduled contest(s). Post-participation ejections and any applicable suspension penalties shall also be served during the offending team's next scheduled contest(s). Conferences and institutions may choose to implement additional penalties for misconduct.

Note 3: A listing of ejection and suspension procedures is contained in Appendix D.

Note 4: Several of the rule references listed have been updated from those on pages 26-28 of the current NCAA Baseball - 2017 and 2018 Rules book. The penalties remain unchanged.

# Mechanics Changes

The Collegiate Commissioners Association (CCA) opted for slight tweaks as opposed to major overhauls when it comes to mechanics changes for NCAA baseball umpires during the 2021 season.

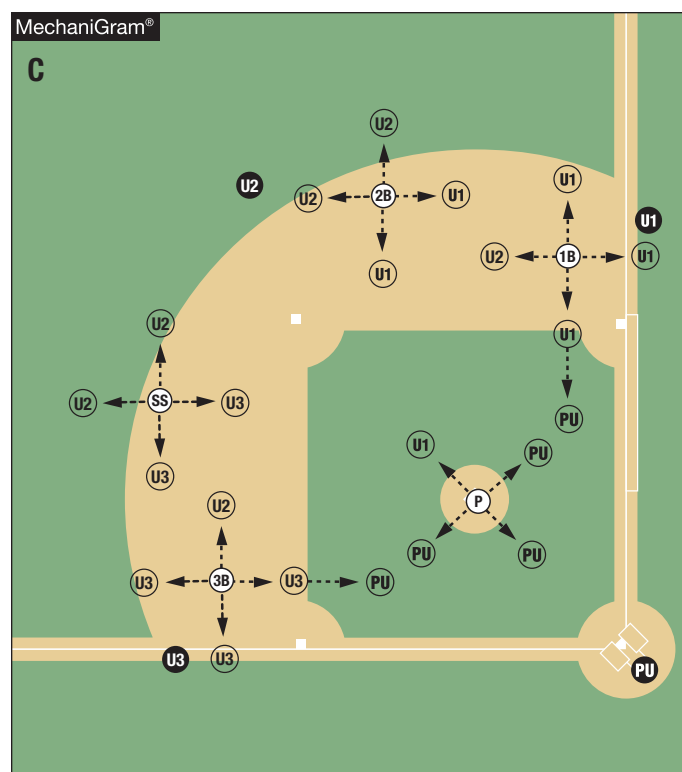
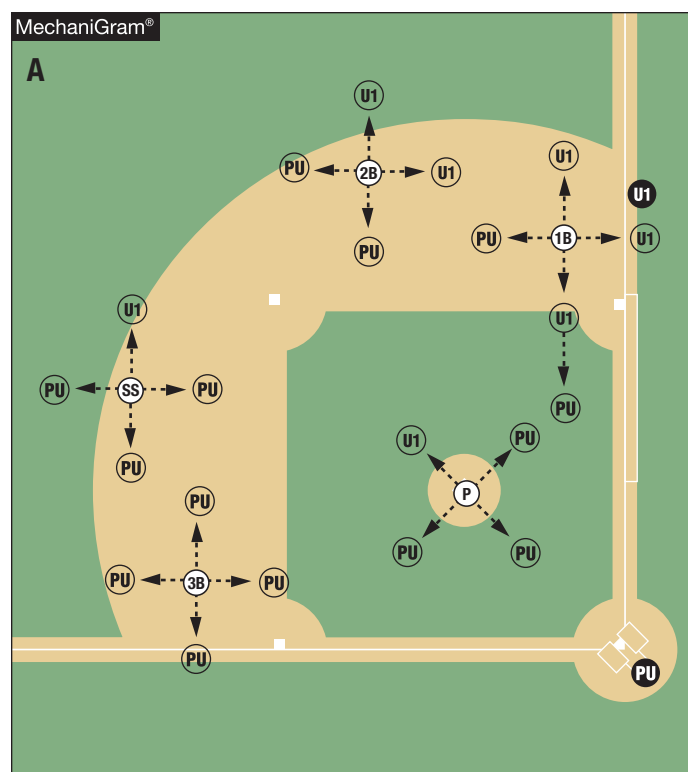
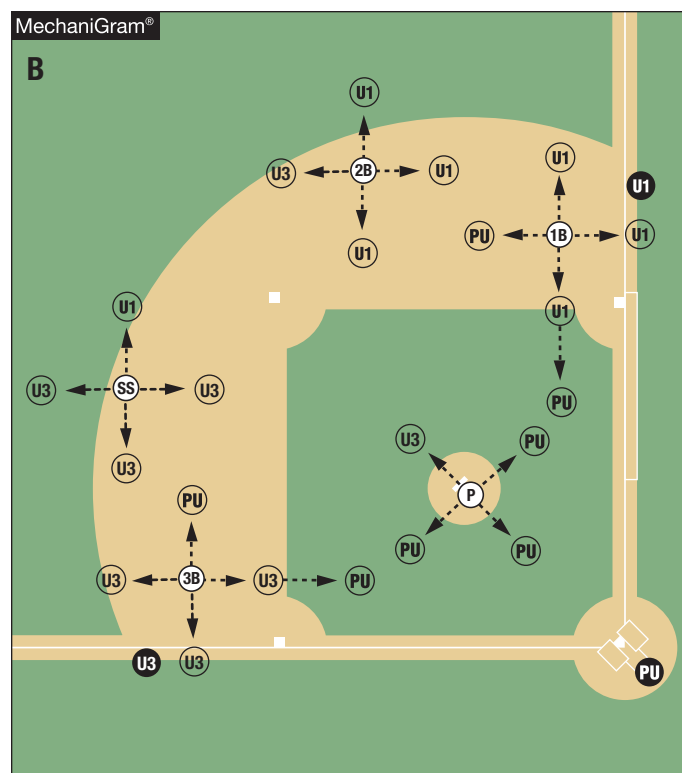
The most significant change involves the 20-second action clock, which is spelled out in great detail on page 15 of this preseason guide. The action clock combines both a rule change and a mechanics change for umpires, as they must know what is legal and what is a violation by rule, and also must know how to adjudicate this rule from a mechanics perspective.

New language was added to the CCA manual to specify on-field timing responsibilities in addition to the action clock. Starting with the 2021 season, the third-base umpire in both three-person and four-person mechanics will be responsible for all timing between pitches and innings during a game. In two-person mechanics, it will be the base umpire.

The 2021 CCA manual also features updated MechaniGrams to reflect new language added last year regarding the starting positions for umpires in the U1 and U3 positions. U1 and U3 should be well positioned to see line drives hit at the feet of the first or third baseman in their normal positions (with a step or two forward) and to make that call.

The new MechaniGrams shown here illustrate the change for two-umpire (MechaniGram A), three-umpire (MechaniGram B) and four-umpire (MechaniGram C) systems. On balls hit immediately in front of the first or third basemen, U1 or U3, respectively, will have catch/no

catch responsibilities. On balls that require the first or third baseman to move in significantly, the plate umpire (PU) will have catch/no catch responsibilities. □





# 20-Second Action Rule Limit

When the ball is “dead”, the pitcher must engage the pitcher’s rubber with possession of the ball before the ball can be put into play.

First pitch of each half-inning OR “Time” is called OR Ball becomes “dead” (for example, a foul ball or pickoff throw goes out of play)	Pitcher engages rubber with possession of ball AND Catcher in catcher’s box AND Batter in batter’s box	Start time limit when plate umpire signals “Play”
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When the ball remains “alive” between batters or between pitches, the time limit begins when the pitcher has possession of the ball in the circle surrounding the pitcher’s rubber.

First pitch of any subsequent at-bat (Give batter opportunity to get to the plate and be in the box for the first pitch.)	Pitcher has possession of ball in the circle surrounding the pitcher’s rubber AND Catcher in catcher’s box AND Batter in batter’s box	Start time limit when plate umpire signals “Play” (Point at pitcher or use twirling signal used to reset the clock.)
--	---	--

After each pitch during an at-bat (following the first pitch) when ball remains alive and batter remains at bat	Pitcher has possession of ball in the circle surrounding the pitcher’s rubber AND Catcher in catcher’s box	No signal is required. Start the time limit when the pitcher receives the ball and is on the mound
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## The timer shall stop under the following circumstances:

- The pitcher begins his windup motion or begins the motion to come set.
- The pitcher makes a pickoff attempt.
- With runners on base, the pitcher steps off the rubber to feint a pickoff attempt (in which case the timer shall reset and start again immediately).
- The catcher leaves the catcher’s box to give defensive signals or to confer with the pitcher (in which case the timer shall stop, reset, and start again after the catcher returns to the catcher’s box).
- The umpire calls “time” for any legitimate reason.

*Before starting a windup motion or beginning the motion to come set, if a pitcher steps off the rubber when there are no runners or steps off without feinting or making a pickoff attempt with runners on base, the time limit (or clock) does not stop unless the umpire grants the pitcher “time” for a legitimate*

*reason. If the pitcher has started the motion to come set (which stops the time limit) or has come to a set position and then steps off without feinting or making a pickoff attempt, a violation has occurred.*

## 120-Second Between Innings Limit

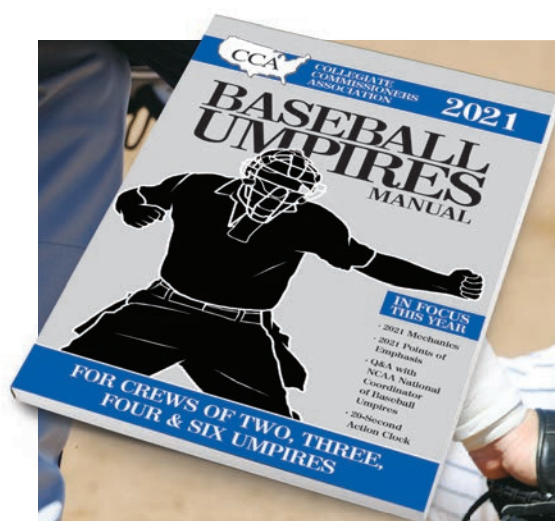
- Between innings, 120 seconds to be ready for first pitch
  - Pitcher holding the ball and touching the pitcher’s rubber.
  - Batter standing in the batter’s box ready to hit.
- Starts when all defensive players have started to leave their positions after the last out has been made.
- Stops when the umpire calls/ signals “Play” for the first pitch of the next half-inning.
- If no visible clock is being utilized, with 30 seconds left the base umpire keeping the timing device will visually cue the plate umpire by extending one hand/arm above his head. The plate umpire will announce “30 seconds” and summon the lead-off batter to the plate. At

15 seconds left, the base umpire will lower his arm to parallel with the ground, and point at the plate umpire when the time limit expires.

- During the first inning for both pitchers and when a relief pitcher enters the game to start an inning, the clock starts as usual, but the pitcher is entitled to eight (8) warm-up pitches. There is no penalty if the time limit expires.
- If the catcher is the third out or on base when the third out is made, the offensive team should have someone ready to warm up the pitcher. If the game catcher is not out of the dugout with 30 seconds left in the time limit and another player is warming up the pitcher, hold the pitcher with one warm-up left and wait for the game catcher to arrive to throw down following the last warm-up pitch.
- Enforce the rule and use common sense.

For further information, refer to Appendix F. □

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