The Approved Rulings (A.R.) will help you be softball wise; the softball whys provide some insight as to the rationale for a particular rule.

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Rules

A.R. Rules: A number of NCAA umpires are being assigned to an NCAA team versus an international team (Japan, Netherlands, Toyota’s Women’s team). Do NCAA rules apply to these contests? Can coaches mutually agree to alter specific rules? Also, do we check bats from just the NCAA team or must their opponent comply with the equipment standards as well?

RULING: All competition involving an NCAA institution must be played under NCAA playing rules (See Rules in introduction) so whether the opponent is an international team or belongs to a rival organization (for example, NAIA, NJCAA institution), umpires will not need to learn and enforce different rules or mechanics in order to officiate the game and NCAA teams will not have to own additional equipment.

SOFTBALL WHYS- Why is there a difference between no restrictions on the number of innings in a scrimmage and a ten inning limit in a contest in the non-championship season?

RULE FOUNDATION- A.R. Rules Non-Championship Segment

COMMENT- If the activity is an institutional scrimmage (as all or part of a practice) with part of the team against the other part, there is no limit on the innings because teams are limited by NCAA bylaws regarding the number of practice hours (20 hours per week; four hours per day).

But if it involves competition with players other than those on the team (excluding use of the alumni exception), then it falls under the NCAA Bylaw restrictions regarding contests and would be counted as three hours of athletically related activity regardless of the number of actual contact hours. (See the addendum at the end of this document for a list of applicable bylaws by division regarding contests.) The new options regarding the length of fall contests are:

1) use regular playing rules which define a game as seven innings or any greater number of innings needed in order to break a tie; or

2) choose the option of mutually agreeing to a deviation of the rules...in this case referring to number four "playing a maximum of ten innings per game."

Option two means play can be no more than ten innings even if the score is tied at the end of the tenth which should help tournament games stay on time since NCAA play does not allow time limits. It also allows coaches to mutually agree to play eight, nine or ten innings for a game that is not tied. The intent here is to allow coaches to agree, for example, to nine innings with three going to each of a team’s three pitchers so there would be planned substitutions. In either case, if option two is used, the game cannot extend beyond ten innings. Note- if coaches agree to play either eight or nine innings they must also determine if play will stop at that predetermined inning if the game is tied or if play will continue past the predetermined inning in order to break the tie (to a maximum of ten innings).

Definitions

SOFTBALL WHYS- What is the purpose of adding the term “runner” to the playing rules? It seems like an unnecessary term since we are all used to batter-runner and base runner.

RULE FOUNDATION- 1.48

COMMENT- This addition was really a term of convenience in rule writing. The rules have always referred to a batter-runner as the player running the bases who was in the batter’s box at the time of the pitch until play on the last pitch has concluded. And a base runner is the player running the bases who occupied a base at the time of the pitch until she is either out or safe. There are many circumstances where the result of play is different for these two types of runner and they are rightly separated (for example, the batter-runner is returned to the batter’s box while the base runner is returned to the base occupied at the time of the pitch). But there are other times when the runners would be treated the same (for example a base runner who is obstructed at second base would be treated the same as a batter-runner who is obstructed at second base). So this new term of “runner” is now used when the rule wording refers equally to batter-runners and base-runners and eliminates the need to consistently write “batter-runner and base runners”.

Field

A.R.2.1: Concerning the backstop distance...our brick wall is exactly 25 feet from the plate apex. By adding the required padding, the distance will be three inches short of the minimum. Must we move our field outward from the backstop to accommodate the minimum?

RULING: The 25 foot minimum/30 foot maximum distances from the apex of home plate should include the padding whenever possible. That said though, the rule says the dimensions "should" not "shall" be 25 and 30 feet to accommodate many of the fields that will have to be retrofitted for padding. One solution is certainly to move the bases, pitcher’s and home plates outward toward the homerun fence. Another is that the backstop will be several inches short of the requested minimum. Note however that to host an NCAA event, an explanation of being just short of the minimum might be necessary on your facility assessment.
A.R.2.4*1: In honor of breast cancer awareness month, can the bases, pitcher’s plate and/or home plate be painted pink?

RULING: No, those parts of the field and the lines must be white as specified in the rules. The intent is for visibility, safety of the players who need to visually locate the bases/plate to make a play (both offense and defense), and for umpire accuracy (colors are harder than white to see from a distance). Painted logos in the grass, banners, tarp covers and bunting in the field area are most often used in addition to special player uniforms and commemorative ribbons pinned to the right panel of the hats or over the hearts for umpires. These options are not precluded by the rules and can be expanded to observe holidays as well.

A.R.2.4*2: May a six inch long sticker be applied to the center third of the rise of a base to identify an institution, conference or commemorate an event (such as Heart Healthy Day)?

RULING: A sticker with NCAA, team or conference logo, name or abbreviation may be displayed as long as the sticker is no higher than the top of the base and the sticker is in the middle third of the rise of the base. However stickers commemorating a charity or event are not approved.

A.R.2.8: A base coach insists on standing about 80 feet from home plate at the time of release of the pitch.

RULING: The coaches’ box only has 2 restraining lines to prevent the coach from being too close to the batter’s box and too close to the foul line. However with no back edges, the coach is free to retreat all the way to the sideline and home run fences as his/her comfort level dictates. The definition of lines denotes the spaces to which participants are restricted and without those back lines, there is no limitation. (See also Rule 2.15.)

A.R.2.9: The home team has heaters in its dugout but the visiting team does not. The questions are: 1) does this create an unfair advantage; 2) does the home team have to provide heaters to the visiting teams.

RULING: There is nothing in the playing rules that requires a home team to provide the same amenities (i.e. heaters, blankets or warm clothing) to their visitors that they have for themselves. In Rule 5.1 there are some accommodations for visiting teams pregame batting practice equipment and space but other than that coaches are left to their own sense of fair play or possible conference requirements (for example, most conferences have arrangements for a water cooler in not only the home team but also the visiting team dugout).

SOFTBALL WHYS: Why is protection on the field side of the dugout not required for the safety of the players on the bench?

RULE FOUNDATION- Rule 2.9

COMMENT- The committee has not required complete or partial fencing or netting because of the wide variety of field layouts and dugouts. Based on the depth of the dugout and its location to home plate, and the number and types of exits, the committee is suggesting consideration be given to enclosing the field side in some way that is appropriate for the level of play contested there. But the decision on how best to enclose a particular dugout is up to the institution.

A.R.2.10: Is it permissible for a stenciled logo or words to be positioned on the homerun fence in straight away centerfield?

RULING: There is nothing in the NCAA playing rules to preclude this however there might be limitations by the respective championship committees for their postseason play and there may be ancillary requirements for games with television coverage. That said, in general, most fields have a ‘batter’s eye’ or neutral background in straight away center field to not only help the batter pick up the pitch but also the catcher to pick up a thrown ball from the outfield.

SOFTBALL WHYS: Why is there a pitcher’s lane in the NCAA game and not in any level of play?

RULE FOUNDATION- Rule 2.20

COMMENT- The pitcher’s lane was added to the lines on the field to serve as a visible reminder that the pitcher’s stride must be forward toward home plate. College pitchers were straying further to the side and throwing across their bodies in biomechanically unhealthy ways. In an effort to motivate players to adopt correct mechanics, for coaches to teach compliance with the playing rules, and for umpires to have a reference point in enforcing the rule, the NCAA Softball Rules Committee added these required lines to the field. Much like the lines of the batter’s boxes, the pitcher’s lane is not likely to last throughout the entire game but they are valuable tools to helping players identify the spaces to which they are restricted.

Equipment

Batting Gloves

SOFTBALL WHYS- NCAA playing rules specify all equipment must be worn properly and yet a base runner may carry her batting gloves in, instead of on, her hands as she runs the bases. Conversely, a player may not hang batting gloves out of her pants pockets.

RULE FOUNDATION: Rule 3.1.2 and 9.7

COMMENT- Batting gloves are designed for the hands and many coaches teach carrying them to prevent possible finger injuries so that is allowable however hanging them out of pockets is corrected because nothing good can come from that location. Potential tags on flapping gloves are hard to see and falling gloves which interfere with play result in penalties so tucking the gloves all the way into the pocket keeps them accessible yet unlikely to interfere with play.
Softballs

A.R.3.2.3: The host team, which is responsible for providing game balls, wishes to remove the manufacturer’s gloss by rubbing them up with Gorilla Gold or Turface but the rule says the specifications of the ball cannot be changed. Can the balls be rubbed up?

RULING: These substances may be used to rub up the game balls PRIOR to being given to the plate umpire. The prohibition on foreign substances applies to during the game by the participants and the prohibition on changing the specifications of the ball refers to the specifications in 3.2.1.

Bat-Knob

A.R.3.3.1.8.2: During bat checks, one bat has a replacement grip that clearly creates a taper at the knob of the bat and another has a rubber ring that only slips over the knob of the bat.

RULING: The cone, flare styles are not legal because they compromise the intended differentiation between the knob and handle. But the second one was originally marketed as a way to identify particular bats for players and later marketed as absorbing vibration to the bottom hand to reduce sting. That second type of ring is specifically allowed as a marking on the knob for identification.

Bat-Grip

A.R.3.3.1.8.3^1: A player wants to grip her bat handle with a diamond style taping which leaves parts of the handle visible within the 15 inches of the grip.

RULING: Rule 3.3.1.8.3 specifically allows for a continuous spiral tape but it need not be a solid layer. The rationale for a continuous spiral tape is to have one single piece of tape as the top or only layer (not multiple pieces that will fray and peel off) but it can have open turns that reveal the handle.

A.R.3.3.1.8.3^2: A legal bat has material under the tape of the grip which seems to be a rope or something that is spiraled around the handle under the tape that aids in gripping the bat. As long as it is securely under the grip, is this bat attachment allowed?

RULING: The bat should not be allowed if there is a substance under the allowable grip but if it is the tape itself (not more than 2 layers but could be the x pattern mentioned above), it would be allowed. Note there are translucent bat grips that have paper material under the grip for team or player identification. These grips would be legal because they do not enhance the ability to grip the bat.

Inappropriate

A.R.3.3.2^1: With a runner on first base, the batter grounds into a fielder’s choice putting the base runner out at second base. Before the next batter enters the batter’s box, the defensive coach informs the plate umpire that the last batter used an inappropriate bat. The rules require the bat be removed from the team’s possession, the player be declared out and ejected and base runners shall not advance but does the out remain?

RULING: Yes, base runners not put out on the batted ball must return to the base occupied at the time of the pitch, but outs obtained by the defense remain. Also applies to 11.16.3 Effect.

A.R.3.3.2^2: Immediately following a two RBI double, the opposing coach challenges the validity of the bat used. However, the on-deck batter tossed the bat out of the way of the advancing base runners and it landed in the on-deck circle where she left an identical bat. On request, the umpires examine the two bats and determine that one is inappropriate.

RULING: An appeal that an inappropriate bat has been used must be made before the identification of the bat that was used becomes questionable. If a suspect bat has been removed to the vicinity of other identical or similar bats and the umpires are not absolutely positive which bat was used, the effect for 3.3.2 cannot be enforced except that the bat shall be removed from play and an incident report shall be filed by the plate umpire.

A.R.3.3.2.3^1: The leadoff batter hits a mammoth out-of-the-park homerun. Before the opposing coach can get the attention of the plate umpire to question the appropriateness of the bat, the on-deck batter picks up the bat and steps into the batter’s box. The coach then, prior to a pitch, gets the umpire’s attention and points out that the bat is not on the NCAA Approved Softball Bat List.

RULING: Once the umpire verifies that the bat is not on the NCAA Approved Softball Bat List, the bat is removed from play, the leadoff batter is declared out, ejected and the run does not stand. In addition, the on-deck batter who also brought the bat into the batter’s box is declared out and ejected. The plate umpire is responsible for filing an incident report detailing the two ejections.

A.R.3.3.2.3^2: Once the game has begun, a bat without a sticker indicating successful barrel compression testing (BCT) is discovered in a game where BCT has occurred which renders the bat inappropriate. What is the penalty?

RULING: Bringing a bat into play that was not presented for BCT is considered a serious breach of sporting behavior (Rule 13) and results in ejection of the violator, the bat being surrendered and an incident report. If no specific player is in possession of the bat at the time it is reported, the head coach shall be the person ejected. In addition, if reported anytime from entry into the batter’s box until the first pitch to the next batter, the batter who used the bat is declared out and any base runners not put out on the batted ball must return to their bases occupied at the time of the pitch. If reported after the first pitch to the next batter, as long as the bat can be positively identified, the bat is removed from the team’s possession, the batter who used it is out and ejected and any base runners not put out on the batted ball may remain on the bases gained by the time of the report.
SOFTBALL WHYS- Why do NCAA softball umpires, unlike baseball umpires, have to check team equipment rather than put all the responsibility on coaches to legally equip their teams?

RULE FOUNDATION- Code of Conduct/Coaches/B, Rule 3.3.4

COMMENT- By rule, coaches bear the responsibility for legally equipping and properly attiring their teams. The role of umpires in confirming compliance has changed over time from overseeing all the game equipment to just reviewing the appropriateness of balls and bats. Umpires are no longer responsible for verifying the legality of equipment which does not provide a competitive advantage or possible risk to opponents,...for example batting helmets and catching gear. Our expectation is that coaches verify these items are appropriate but if they error, their players, not their opponents, are the ones affected.

Umpires do, however, continue to check game balls to be sure they are the same model and game suitable to ensure fair play. In addition, they have the time consuming task of confirming the bats are on the current NCAA Approved Softball Bat List, bear the ASA 2004 certification mark, and are game suitable. Teams with inappropriate or damaged bats compromise the core of the game so that's why a third party reviews the coaches’ decisions. This verification by the umpires provides a safety net or double check on the most important pieces of equipment which could provide unfair competitive advantages to one team over another or pose a safety risk to unsuspecting opponents.

Bat List

A.R.3.3.4.1^1: One of the teams does not present an NCAA Approved Bat List prior to their game. How long does the team have from the scheduled start of the game to obtain one? If it is unreasonable to obtain one, may the game be played anyway? If not, what is the status of the game… a forfeit… no contest?

RULING: The list is required by rule and no competition shall be played without one. If a coach does not have one on site, every effort should be made by the coach to obtain one. If the opposing coach (who has a list) is willing to share, the affected team could use a different color ink to list their bats on just the one list. In the unlikely event a list cannot be obtained, the umpires, in consultation with the on-site administrator, shall declare the game “no contest”. (See also Rule 6.20.)

A.R.3.3.4.1^2: One of the coaches cuts and pastes pages of the bat list so the list presented to the umpire is only one page rather than wasting paper to print the entire list for every game.

RULING: Coaches cannot edit the list however they need only print pages that list the bat models they use as long as the pages are intact and the top of each page has the date. Allowing a coach to cut and paste parts of pages together makes it impossible for the umpires to know which editions of the list are being combined and presented.

A.R.3.3.4.1^3: The opposing coaches have two different bat lists, one dated one month earlier than the other.

RULING: Although we wish this is not possible, since the list is posted on multiple sites, there is the possibility that one or more will not have the most current list. We will make every effort to prevent it but should it happen, the more current list should be used and the team with the older list should be allowed to mark their bats on the more current list.

A.R.3.3.4.1^4: The color of a bat model is listed on the NCAA Approved Softball Bat List as orange but the bat is actually pink/salmon.

A bat with “Worth 454” is stenciled on the bat but the NCAA Approved Softball Bat list has Worth 454 (-9) and (-10). Do these details have to match exactly or is it only the model numbers that must match?

RULING: It is the model numbers which must exactly match but the additional columns provide useful information. For example, the Worth 454 bats have parentheses and a drop number on the list but not on the bat. The parentheses are needed to differentiate the models with strikes but like all other parentheses, will not be on the bat. So the Worth 454 need only be stenciled with “Worth 454”.

Bat-Inspection

A.R.3.3.4.3^1: During bat checks for suitability, a two piece model has significant wobble at the connection.

RULING: Judgment call as to what is significant wobble. Multi-piece bats at production tend to have slight wobble so if that is the case, then the bats are “as manufactured” and should be allowed to remain in play. However if the wobble is significant, it is no longer “as manufactured” and should be disqualified as damaged. Benefit of the doubt should go to the player and allow the bat to remain in use until the wobble is determined to be excessive (as in when waggled, there is a noticeable lag time in the barrel moving to catch up with the handle).

A.R.3.3.4.3^2: During bat checks, the umpire crew notices one team has flat, opaque disks with a logo and a number affixed to the knobs of their bats which covered the manufacturer’s note of the length and weight of each bat.

RULING: The stickers are legal and are often used for bat identification for players or to indicate bats passing Barrel Compression Testing. Umpires must match the model number stenciled on the bat to the model number on the NCAA Approved Softball Bat List but need not worry about lengths and weights.
A.R.3.3.4.3*3: Two similar problems during bat check...the red Nike bat has no model number stenciled on the bat and several models of Anderson bats have no model numbers although Anderson has provided a letter saying the bats are legal for NCAA play. Can these bats be used in NCAA games?

RULING: The model number stenciled on the bat must exactly match the model number on the current NCAA Approved Softball Bat list in the case of the Nike bat, it is legal because there is no model number on the bat AND no model number on the list so that is a match. In the case of the Anderson bats, there are model numbers on the list so the bat without a model number does not match and therefore is not legal.

A.R.3.3.4.3*4: A team has three identical bats, in this case, DeMarini Model CFI 11. Two of the three bats have legible model numbers but only CFI can be read on the third. Can this one bat without legible numbers be used?

RULING: That's not an easy answer because it is a comfort level for both the coach and umpire. The rules say the model number on the bat must exactly match the model number on the list. The coach is responsible for legally equipping the team and bears the most liability but the umpires share responsibility in making sure that rule is met. So if the coach and the umpire are having difficulty reading a number on a bat but other apparently identical bats make it easy to ascertain that the model is on the NCAA Approved Softball Bat List, the bat can be allowed in the game. In this instance, the DeMarini's CFI series bats are very distinctive colors with a yellow 2011 model, orange 2012 and red 2013 model. On the other hand, there are quite a few DeMarini grey models (some legal and some not), and the letters on the barrel are often hard to distinguish. Fs, Ps and 8s are hard to determine when scuffed up so it is understandable that an umpire might allow a hard to read CFI bat but eliminate a similarly hard to read CFP model.

If there is doubt about the legality of a bat, the bat should be disqualified from use.

A.R.3.3.4.3*5: Once the game has begun, a bat not present in the umpire's pregame inspection is discovered in the game or dugout. The coach explains a player who arrived from class after the game began brought the bat with her. Is the team still penalized for a player in class or can the umpire examine the bat and add it to the bat list?

RULING: Bringing a bat into play that was not presented for umpire inspection or BCT is considered a serious breach of sporting behavior (Rule 13) and results in ejection of the violator, the bat being surrendered and an incident report. If no specific player is in possession of the bat at the time it is reported, the head coach shall be the person ejected. If reported anytime from entry into the batter's box until the first pitch to the next batter, the batter is declared out and any base runners not put out on the batted ball must return to their bases occupied at the time of the pitch. If reported after the first pitch to the next batter, as long as the bat can be positively identified, the bat can be taken from the team's possession, the batter who used it is out and ejected and any base runners not put out on the batted ball may remain on the bases gained by the time of the report.

A.R.3.3.4.3*6: After the umpires completed bat checks and the game has started, a coach wishes to add a bat to the team's inventory of available bats.

RULING: A coach may only introduce a new bat (even to replace a bat that breaks in the course of the game) at the start of the next game or if the game was halted and the introduction is prior to the pregame meeting which precedes the restart of the game.

A.R.3.3.4.3*7: A team has seven bats in their dugout at the start of the game but while coaching the bases in the middle of the game, the opposing coach notices about a dozen. The coach asks the umpire and upon checking the bat list, only seven bats were inspected and verified on the team's bat list. Four models were models not checked in so those bats were given to the OSA to secure. But the other was the same model that the team had checked in two bats. So there are three identical bats, two of which had been checked in.

RULING: If it cannot be determined which of the three bats was not presented pregame, the umpires shall remove all three bats of the same model and have them secured by the OSA. That would leave the team with only five bats for the remainder of the game. At the end of the game, the head coach may retrieve all the secured bats and present them for the next game. The umpires are responsible for filing an Incident Report.

Bat-Markings

**SOFTBALL WHYS** - Why is it not legal to use paint or a sharpie marker to put identifying numbers, names or inspirational sayings on the bat other than the knob?

**RULE FOUNDATION** - Rule 3.3

**COMMENT** - To protect the integrity of the game and provide some assurance to the opposing team that there is no potential for an unfair advantage gained by a player who uses a bat with custom markings, the rules are quite clear that the only exception for marking bats is on the knob where bat/ball contact is highly unlikely. Not only could markings on the taper and barrel be distracting (glittered, glow in the dark, etc.) but numerous types of paint have metallic content in them that theoretically could improve performance.
Warm-Up Bats

SOFTBALL WHYS: Two years ago fungo bats were removed from pregame warm-ups and this year they are not only reinstated for pregame but may also be in the on-deck circle. Why have fungo bats been given this favorable status?
RULE FOUNDATION: Rule 3.4
COMMENT: At the request of coaches, the rules committee has agreed to allow fungo bats to be exempt from the requirement that all bats in team areas must be on the current NCAA Softball Approved Bat List. Because of their distinctive style, there is no risk and no advantage to a fungo bat illegally being used in a game so using it in any warm-up activity is now allowed.

Gloves

A.R.3.7.1: One out, base runner on second base. On a base hit to right field, the base runner misses third base but apparently scores. It is discovered that the right fielder used an illegal glove. The offensive coach chooses to take the result of the play since a run scored. After that choice, the pitcher toes the pitcher’s plate, steps back and appeals to third base for the missed base. Can the offensive coach make a second choice?
RULING: First, if the offensive coach is already the beneficiary of a base hit and a scored run, chances are he/she would not bring the illegal glove to the umpire's attention and we know the defensive coach would not alert the umpire so that only leaves the rare circumstance when the umpire notices it first.
BUT if this play happened, the offensive coach would get the option to take the play or nullify it. After that choice, the offensive coach is done. Assuming the choice is that the play stands, then if the defense correctly appeals the missed base, the offending runner is declared out (second out) and the batter-runner remains on base. The offensive coach is not given a second option. (See also Rule 7.1.)

A.R.3.7.2*1: Following a catch on a foul ball over the dugout, the umpire is asked to rule on a glove that appears to have a tacky substance. The rules clarify the offensive coach’s options but is silent on what happens to the glove.
RULING: The glove can be cleaned and as long as it is no longer tacky, the umpire may allow the fielder to use it later in the game.

A.R.3.7.2*2: The outfielders have Kanga attachments on the outside of the web of their gloves to provide warmth to their throwing hands in cold weather.
RULING: The Kanga attachment is not legal because it violates the requirement to be worn “as designed” and it fundamentally changes the specifications of the gloves. But that does not preclude its use in practices and pregame warm-up. (See also Rule 3.1.2.)

Helmets

A.R.3.8.1: A player with a face injury wears an ice hockey helmet with a face mask and NOCSAE seal while she is batting and running the bases. Is there a waiver process to legalize this safety equipment?
RULING: There is no provision for anyone to set aside the requirement to wear a NOCSAE approved batting helmet or replace a batting helmet with an ice hockey helmet. However when she is on defense there is no helmet requirement, a protective helmet from another sport may be worn if the institution deems it appropriate and the umpires do not disqualify it.

SOFTBALL WHYS: The rules say that a face mask may be worn and states it should meet the NOCSAE standard. Can a mask that is worn offensively meet the NOCSAE standard and not display the NOCSAE approval and if so how would umpires know it was approved? Or does this mean that the mask must display “NOCSAE Approved” on it like in ASA and NFHS?
RULE FOUNDATION: Rule 3.8.5
COMMENT: There is a rule difference between the codes. The NCAA rule is that the face mask should meet the NOCSAE standard for the helmet and mask combination. The ASA and NFHS address the helmet and mask separately and require each to be individually NOCSAE approved.
As much as we would like to say “must” and not “should”, it is not reasonable to expect NCAA umpires to know which face mask is approved for use with which helmet. For example, Schutt's Pro-Guard 3000 facemask meets the standard when affixed to any Schutt helmet however Schutt's original Pro-Guard only meets the standard when affixed to the Schutt 2788, 2794, 2800 or 2898 models. And some facemasks meet the standard even when affixed to a competitor’s helmet so just because a Rawlings mask is on a Mizuno helmet, it should not be eliminated from play...it might indeed be a suitable combination. So for the umpire combinations are complicated. HOWEVER for the coach who provides the equipment, a suitable match "should" be provided either by purchasing the equipment already attached or by reading the instruction sheet on the unattached mask and attaching it to one of the helmet models listed as approved.

Uniforms

A.R.3.10 and 3.10.2: There appears to be a discrepancy regarding foul weather gear. Rule 3.10 says foul weather gear are optional parts of the uniform and may be of mixed styles but Rule 3.10.2 says foul weather garments worn by multiple players should be of the same style, color, trim... Which part of the rule takes precedence?
RULING: These two rules are not really in conflict. The intent of 3.10 is that all players need not select the same foul weather gear...so one player may choose a red sweatshirt and another a black jacket to stay warm. 3.10.2 refers to foul weather gear worn by multiple players so if a third player is cold, she can choose to wear a red sweatshirt or a black jacket to match either of her teammates but cannot choose a jacket or sweatshirt of another color.
A.R.3.10.2: On a beautiful day, a pitcher who prefers keeping her arm sweaty, wears foul weather gear while running the bases. Can an individual player decide she is cold and cover her uniform jersey if the other players indicate they are warm enough to play without the extra clothing?

RULING: Players, coaches and umpires should be allowed to wear as many layers of allowable clothing as they need to participate comfortably regardless of the weather conditions. Note-if a batter wears a loose fitting garment that hangs into the strike zone, she should be instructed to tuck it in, roll it up or remove it so as not to disadvantage the pitcher nor block the umpire’s view of the strike zone.

A.R.3.10.3: Several players on the same team are wearing spongy pre-wrap product (often used before taping by athletic trainers) rolled in their hair. Each player is wearing a different color. Is it legal to use this product in this manner since it is not as intended by the manufacturer and is the product considered to be headgear and therefore must be the same predominant color?

RULING: This product’s use is legal and, because it is a safer alternative to almost every other type of headband, it should not be discouraged. It is considered a headband which is an accessory no longer addressed in the NCAA softball rules so colors can be mixed.

A.R.3.10.4: Players on a team have American flag patches sewn on their jerseys however a Chinese player has a Chinese flag on hers.

RULING: Rule 3.10.4 allows for patches as long as all the uniforms are identical so differing flags would not be allowed under this rule. However, there is no similar rule to helmet decals so a player may have a flag of another country on the helmet as long as it does not cover the required NOCSAE identification which must be legible.

A.R.3.10.8: Infielders on a team want to wear their kneepads on their shins while on defense and batting and only move them to their knees while running the bases. Does this violate using the equipment as intended by the manufacturer?

RULING: Most kneepads are marketed as knee/shin pads and are not even sport specific to softball. But all are designed to minimize bruises or to protect current injuries from intensifying on the legs so they are legal.

A.R.3.10.9: A pitcher who is recovering from two shoulder surgeries has experimented with different types of compression shirts. The one brand that works best only comes in black and white, but the team sleeves are red. Since the rule book specifies that colors must match, what can be done to protect the pitcher?

RULING: To avoid any issues, the options would be for the pitcher to wear red sleeves on top of the compression shirt or to buy white or black sleeves for the rest of the team and wear them on days she pitches. If you do either, there are no issues. Also as the weather turns warmer, if no other player wears sleeves, she can be the only one with black or white showing so she would be in compliance with the rule. The other option is to explain to each umpire crew that it is a medical issue and then it would be their judgment as to if it would be allowed. That would be a crew-by-crew decision.

Personnel

A.R.4.3: A base coach is limited to having scoring materials and either a stopwatch (NFHS) or indicator (ASA) in the coaches’ box but is it true that the NCAA rule book does not restrict the coaches’ possessions?

RULING: It is true that there are no restrictions other than cell phones and pagers are not allowed on the field (See Rule 5.9.8) so a coach may have useful items to help manage the offense such as lineup cards, scouting reports, scoring materials, a stopwatch and/or indicator.

A.R.4.4.1: In the first game of a double header, both the head and assistant/pitching coach are ejected and there are no other coaches travelling with the team.

RULING: The institution can designate an employee or appoint someone to be responsible for the team for the remainder of the game. Athletic trainers, sports information staff, student managers and student coaches often travel with teams and any could be named Acting Head Coach. Student-athletes are not eligible to be appointed. Unless the ejection also carried a suspension, once the game is over, so are the ejections, therefore, game two would start with both coaches. (See also Rule 13.2.)

A.R.4.4.1.5: An assistant coach requests a suspension of play to talk to the base runner on second base but it is not granted until the head coach addresses the request to the plate umpire.

RULING: Unlike NCAA baseball, conversations and business transactions are not limited to just the head coach and the plate umpire. Often the nearest coach and umpire to the play will have a more meaningful conversation than their counterparts who were not as involved in the play. Under the substitution rule (8.5.1.2), the rule specifies "the coach making the substitution shall"...not "the head coach shall" which gives the authority to make a substitution to any coach. That said though, the head coach is responsible for all communication with the umpire so the head coach is accountable for the information, misinformation, or choices in vocabulary of his/her staff and student-athletes.
A.R.4.9: With a base runner on third base and one out, the batter hits a fly ball to the deepest part of the outfield, which if caught, will result in the base runner easily scoring on a sacrifice fly. As the centerfielder is up against the fence and in position to make the catch, a spectator reaches over the fence into the field of play and makes contact with the batted ball just prior to the ball reaching the fielder’s glove. The base umpire calls dead ball and rules spectator interference. Obviously, they rule the batter out (because the defense was the offended team prevented from making the out) but is there rule support for the offense also being “offended” by the fact that base runner would have scored easily on the sacrifice fly?

RULING: Yes, the ideal result for spectator interference is that players are penalized or advantaged as if interference had not occurred so although the rule is written as “the offended team”, it should be interpreted as either or both teams.

Games Management

A.R.5.2.4: Between the top and bottom of the fifth inning, the home team has its grounds crew re-groom (water, drag, line and replace the bases) the infield. The field work is done quickly but 3-5 minutes elapse during which the home team pitcher throws underhand in foul territory before taking the field for her five warm-up pitches from the mound.

RULING: It was never the rules committee’s intention to suspend a game to re-groom a field except in the event there is a set-up error (for example, playing at a park district and someone discovers the bases are in the 65 foot sleeves) or if conditions are dangerous (such as adding field amendment to a wet area). Corrections, field repairs and/or redrawing lines may only be performed at the direction of the umpires.

Line-Up Card

A.R.5.6.3*1: On the line-up card, a coach wants to print the name of the player as J.C. Smith. The player prefers to go by the first name of “J.C.” instead of her given name of Jacquelyn. Is this contrary to the requirement to list first and last names?

RULING: If the player goes by J.C., that satisfies the requirement. The intent is to provide accurate information to media and opponents so if she is listed as J.C. on the school roster and that’s what she would answer to if someone called out her name, then that actually meets the intent of the rule better than requiring a given name that she doesn’t use and people are not likely to know her as. The key is to avoid confusion so if the team has a Jacquelyn Smith and a Jane Smith, only one may be listed as J.C. Smith and the other would have to use her first name. Lastly, this does not extend to allowing nonspecific nicknames as first names such as “Speedy” Smith or “Lefty” Jones. If a coach wants those monikers, then the player would need to be listed as J.C. “Speedy” Smith.

A.R.5.6.3*2: At the pregame meeting, a coach has crossed off the names of several players who are not available to play due to a class conflict. The game is halted in the third inning and when it is resumed the next day, the players are available. Can they be added to the lineup card as eligible substitutes without penalty?

RULING: Yes, in the pregame meeting for the resumption of play, the plate umpire must verify that the lineup information remains correct. Even though the completion of the halted game is a continuation of the original game, in the interest of student-athlete welfare, if the availability status of a player changes, the lineup card can be changed. A player who was originally eligible for play and is no longer eligible may not compete in the resumption and a player initially not available, may now be listed as an eligible substitute. In addition, uniform numbers should be verified in case a change in jerseys necessitates changes on the line-up card. Note though that the game status of starting players, substitutes and ejected personnel is the same as they were at the time the game was halted. The only change is that players may be added to the lineup card as eligible substitutes. So a starting player who re-entered and was subsequently removed from the game and a substitute already entered and replaced, remain unavailable and a player ejected before the game was halted remains ejected for the resumed game. (See also Rule 6.17.1.)

Players

SOFTBALL WHYS- The starting players for a game must be present and in the dugout when the game starts. However the rules don’t comment on substitute players. Are they also required to be present to be listed on the line-up card?

RULE FOUNDATION: Rule 5.6

COMMENT: No. The intent for having the starting players in uniform, in the dugout and available for play at the start of the game is so the game is not held up waiting for a player or a team does not employ stalling strategies. However it does not preclude late arriving players from participating as long as they are listed on the lineup card as eligible players and then legally substituted into the game.

Electronic Equipment

A.R.5.9*1: A coach is unable to travel with the team but is able to watch the game via live streaming video or statistical software. In the interest of student-athlete welfare, may the coach communicate with the team via cell phone, text or email during the game to minimize the effects of not being there on the student-athletes? If the rules preclude this, is there any exception or waiver process if the coach has a medical condition that prevents him/her from traveling?

RULING: The playing rules preclude coaching from outside the team areas and field and no there is not a waiver process to set this aside. While the NCAA Softball Rules Committee sympathizes with the program wanting to have a coach who is not present to have input into the game, it believes the game should be contested among those physically present. “Distance coaching” by members of the coaching staff, adjunct staff such as team psychologists and strength coaches, private pitching and hitting coaches, and input from other interested parties is only prohibited from the start of the game until its conclusion and therefore remote contact would be allowed before the game and between games of a double header or a tournament.
A.R.5.9^2: The defensive team positions a uniformed team member in the stands behind the backstop to chart their own team's pitches. Also, they had a uniformed team member in the press box running the scoreboard and music between innings. Both of these uniformed players are listed on the team's lineup card. Can they play in the game once they have been working behind the backstop?

**RULING:** Uniformed personnel may not gain information from outside the dugout and be an active participant in the game so at the start of the game, they should be directed to return to the dugout if they are going to play or remove/cover up their jerseys to continue performing those responsibilities. If they perform duties outside the dugout, they render themselves ineligible for the remainder of the game unless the game is halted AND resumed on a later date. In that case, those working players would be eligible to play in the resumed game.

**Cameras**

A.R.5.9.3^2: A team has one of its athletic trainers videotaping with a hand-held tablet camera from the dugout. Because it is not a coach, is this legal?

**RULING:** Under 4.2.2 only team personnel can be in the dugout so if the athletic trainer is located there, he/she must be team personnel. As such, he/she is subject to the ban on videotaping by team personnel in 5.9.3.

A.R.5.9.3^3: Rule 5.9.8 prohibits cell phone cameras from being used in team areas but does not speak to cameras on tablets or cameras that are simply cameras. Are those types of cameras also prohibited or only those on cell phones?

**RULING:** Rule 5.9.8 is the old 3.6 and refers specifically to the use of cell phones. For many years, cell phones have been allowed in team areas (but not on the field) and once cameras became the norm on cell phones, the prohibition on the camera function was clarified here. Rule 5.9.3 and 5.9.4 address all other team cameras (still photography or video) and specifies they are welcome in team neutral areas, preferably one but comparable ones if two are needed. So if a team wishes to have photos taken, they can do so from the designated team neutral camera area, not the dugout. Note Rule 5.9 refers to electronic equipment used for scouting or by team personnel and does not include cameras for television production.

**Misc.**

A.R.5.9.6: At the half inning, a head coach, on the way to the coaches' box, stops behind the plate area to talk to a spectator who is operating the team's radar gun. The coach asks about whether certain pitches from her pitcher were accurately called balls. There was no exchange of scouting information from outside the dugout involving current opponents. It was getting information about the umpire's judgment of balls and strikes. The coach was not inciting the crowd. Is this allowed? If not, which rule applies to warn the coach to not repeat this action?

**RULING:** There is no rule to preclude this discussion nor to prevent a coach from talking to a spectator between innings. However scouting information cannot be obtained and brought in for use and that is very difficult to assess when the coach is speaking quietly to a spectator. If the umpire believes the discussion might be inappropriate, the coach should be reminded of the spirit of the rule and the expectation that the conversation with the spectator falls within it.

A.R.5.9.9: In the fifth inning, there's a hard slide into home plate which results in pushing and shoving between both players. Infielders and the on-deck batter quickly come to the aid of their teammates but the umpires, after conferring with each other, eject only the runner and catcher for fighting. After the game, 1) the umpires ask the OSA if either team videotaped the game and if yes, if it could be made available for their review to be sure no other player should be suspended for fighting; 2) a relative of the on-deck batter brings his video to the OSA to deliver to the umpires which shows involvement of other defensive players.

**RULING:** Umpires may only review video from television replay or from the institutional camera(s) so 1) is appropriate and 2) is not.

A.R.5.11: An institution's promotions staff wants to begin a tradition of having a cannon discharged to celebrate the scoring of runs similar to the celebration they have for scoring in a football game. Is that considered a noisemaker and therefore disallowed? If allowed, must it be fired only when the ball is dead?

**RULING:** The artificial noisemaker rule does NOT apply to this situation as the rule refers to student-athletes, managers, coaches and athletic trainers and this would be done by or under the direction of games management staff. So, specifically, the NCAA softball rules do not preclude the use of a cannon. That said though, the users should be educated that it should not disrupt the flow of the game nor disrespect the opponent and add a guideline that it may only be used for about 10 seconds once play has ceased following the scoring of runs (paralleling the guideline for bands in rule 5.14). Dead ball, live ball really doesn't work all that well in that most runs are scored while the ball is live (a batted ball put in play that scores a run is far more common than a dead ball, out-of-the-park home run). After play is over, fire the cannon, and then the next batter steps in the box. Firing it while the ball is being fielded or thrown and a run is scoring would be as inappropriate as waiting until the next batter is getting in the box and preparing to hit. Lastly, as a courtesy to the umpires and opponents, the new tradition should be explained in the pregame meeting.
The Game

Scoring

A.R.6.1.3.1: Base runners on second and third bases with two outs. The batter swings and misses strike three but the catcher misses the pitch, allowing the base runner from third base to score. The catcher eventually recovers the ball and throws to the pitcher covering home plate who tags out the trailing base runner also attempting to score (third out). The batter-runner, thinking the inning was over, advanced toward, BUT did not touch, first base before the pitcher realizes she has a play and throws to first base.

RULING: The play at the plate is the apparent third out however the defense may appeal after a third out for an infraction by a base runner who apparently scored, to re-establish the correct batting order and to obtain an inning ending force out to nullify an apparent run. When properly appealed, a dropped third strike is a force out, therefore the apparent run does not count and the first batter in the next inning will be the player who follows the batter-runner who was out on the dropped third strike. (See also Rule 7.1.3.)

A.R.6.1.4^2: With two outs and base runners on second and third bases, the batter singles to right field. The lead runner misses home plate but the trailing runner who started on second base is thrown out at the plate for the third out. Immediately after the play, the defense appeals the lead runner missing home plate.

RULING: The defense is granted an advantageous fourth out which supersedes the tag at the plate and negates the apparent run.

A.R.6.1.4^3: With two outs and base runners on first and third bases, the batter apparently singles. The lead runner scores but the base runner from first base misses second base on her way to third base which is where she is thrown out for the third out. The defense correctly appeals the missed base at second even though the base runner was already tagged out at third. What is the effect?

RULING: This is another example of an advantageous fourth out. The base runner is called out for missing the base to which she was forced and as the third out, the run does not score. In addition, because the base runner who started on first base did not successfully advance to the first base to which she was forced, the apparent single is actually scored as a fielder’s choice. (See also Rules 7.1.1.2 and 14.7.1.3.)

A.R.6.1.4^4: With one out and base runners on first and second bases, the batter hits a deep fly ball to the warning track which appears to be uncatchable but is caught for the second out of the inning. The base runner from second base misses third base on her way to apparently scoring and the base runner from first base fails to tag on the catch before she slides safely into third base. Which is the third out of the inning?

RULING: Upon proper appeal, both base runners would be declared out for base running violations and the defensive coach would have the option to select which out would be recorded as the third out. In this case, the logical choice would be the lead runner missing third base in order to negate the apparent scored run.

A.R.6.2: In the bottom of the 7th inning with the score tied 8-8, the home team has the bases loaded. A ball is hit to left-center field with the batter-runner reaching second base and two runs scoring before the play ends and the umpire ends the game. The home team believes the final score is 10-8.

RULING: The rules only award the batter a single and one run scores since the ball remained in play (not a ground rule double or base award, for example). In the bottom of a final inning, the game is immediately over once the winning run scores unless there is an immediate appeal for a violation such as batting out of order or a base runner not advancing to the first base to which she was forced. The final score should be 9-8. (See also Rule 14.6.1.)

Positioning

A.R.6.4.3: While on offense, four players leave the dugout and go to dead-ball territory in the spectator area to swing bats in time with the release of the pitch and one player hits a ball attached to a rubberized cord prior to being the on-deck hitter. During pitching changes, they repeat the actions however they remain in foul, rather than dead-ball, territory.

RULING: I am not sure if the spectator area is appropriate for players to be swinging bats but between innings, but the correct rule would be 6.4.3 which allows swinging, throwing, and pitching in a dead-ball area outside the field of play (most often, a bullpen or batting tunnel). During pitching changes, the correct rule would be 6.4.4 which precludes these activities on the field of play.

Warm-up Pitching

A.R.6.5.6^1: On this particular field, the bullpen is behind centerfield so when the visiting team’s first baseman, who is also the back-up pitcher, wants to keep her arm warm between innings on a cold night, she throws warm-up pitches in foul territory from the edge of the outfield toward the plate. Considering student-athlete welfare, can she be allowed to do so?

RULING: No, this activity is not legal. The rationale is that the umpires and coaches should not have to dodge balls thrown in a variety of directions in the infield area. However any number of players can be in the outfield with any number of balls so she can throw (or pitch) in the outfield. (See Rule 6.5.6.3.)
A.R. 6.5.6.1^2: Warm-ups are expressly allowed at the start of the game, between half innings and during pitching changes but can they also occur during a conference?  
RULING: Yes, although conferences are meant to be brief meeting and teaching opportunities, they can be used for warm-ups for players already on the field.  However, substitutes may not participate in on field warm-ups during a conference and warm-up pitches are not allowed during a conference.  See also Rule 6.10.  

A.R. 6.5.6.1^1: After the pitcher completes four warm-up pitches, she throws once to an infielder at third base.  Is this a violation and if yes, why can’t she throw to a base of her choice?  
RULING: Yes it is a violation.  The intent of the rule is to limit the number of throws AND to limit the direction of throws which should assist the opponents and umpires in doing their jobs while play was suspended without worrying about errant throws. (See also Rule 10.19.)  

A.R. 6.5.6.1^2: The pitcher throws her four warm-up pitches and then throws once to the second baseman covering first base.  
RULING: Legal play.  The rule says the throw must go to first base (the place) but does not say the first baseman (the who) must receive the throw. (See also Rule 10.19.)  

SOFTBALL WHYS- What is the intent of “continuous manner” wording regarding warm-up pitches and throws to bases?  Why can’t a pitcher alternate warm-up pitches and throws to various bases as long as they do not exceed five?  
RULE FOUNDATION: Rule 6.5.6.1  
COMMENT: The intent of the committee in using “continuous throws” is to have the pitcher pitch and then throw to first base or throw to first base then pitch but not to alternate a pitch then a throw, then a pitch, then a throw nor to add in any extraneous activities like fielding balls prior to throwing to first base.  The rational for this rule addition is to keep the game moving in a predictable way that allows for the desired warm-ups yet also provides some safety to other participants who can now position themselves to avoid being hit by errant throws.  

Dead ball  
SOFTBALL WHYS- Why is a catcher, who is looking up to catch a pop foul ball, allowed to steady herself by holding the backstop fence to make a legal catch but she is not allowed to steady herself using a pole located inside a dugout that would prevent her from falling into the dugout and hurting herself?  Why is the first play a legal catch and the second is no catch, dead ball?  
RULE FOUNDATION: Rule 6.8.2  
COMMENT: The rule does not allow the fielder to make contact with any object (including the ground) in dead ball territory when contacting a live ball.  The purpose of the rule is to keep players within the controllable confines of the playing area which therefore avoids the variety of circumstances that could exist past chalk lines or fences marking dead ball territory.  It provides consistency in the result of the play and minimizes risk to participants but it does have a downside as you point out in your example by not allowing a player to use something or someone in dead-ball territory to prevent her from falling.  

Conferences  
SOFTBALL WHYS- During any suspension of play, why and under what circumstances are base runners restricted to their bases?  
RULE FOUNDATION: Rule 6.10.1, 6.10.2, 6.10.3  
COMMENT: In general, base runners are restricted to their bases during the suspension of play when two or more defensive players confer, during the administration of a substitution and during an explanation from an umpire to a player or coach (such as on an illegal pitch or rule interpretation).  The intent is that these are short suspensions in play and having base runners remain at their bases keeps these breaks brief.  
Conversely, base runners are not restricted to their bases during charged conferences, administration of an ejection, resolution of a protest, and the suspension of play for team personnel to attend to an injury.  By interpretation several years ago, this was also expanded to include warm-up pitches for a substitute pitcher.  During these longer breaks in play, base runners are not restricted to their bases however they must return to their bases when the umpire is ready to resume play or be in jeopardy of having an offensive conference charged.  The intent of allowing base runners to leave their positions during these longer suspensions of play is to allow the offensive the same latitude to discuss strategy as the defense has during these extended breaks in the action.  

SOFTBALL WHYS- When a team representative holds a second conference without making a substitution, the team representative(s) who holds the conference is ejected.  But if runners on bases switch bases, the head coach is ejected.  Isn’t that inconsistent?  
RULE FOUNDATION: Rule 6.10.  
COMMENT: Actually all the violators are ejected in each of those situations but it is true the head coach is also ejected if runners switch bases because we believe this would not happen without the head coach’s knowledge.  If he/she allows this unsporting act, he/she too is accountable and is therefore ejected. (See also Rule 6.10.4.3 and 12.5.3.)  

A.R. 6.10: During an offensive conference, the pitcher plays catch with an infielder.  Can she throw warm-up pitches or must she throw overhand?  
RULING: The pitcher can play catch as long as she is ready to play when the offense and umpires are ready.  There is no provision for warm-up pitches (i.e. pitch from the pitcher's plate to home plate) during a conference (see Rule 10.19) so all she can do is throw overhand, sidearm or underhand to a teammate who is not positioned at home plate.  See also Rule 6.10.3.
A.R.6.10.2^1: During a suspension of play for any injury, is it permissible for the offense and/or the defense to talk strategy?
RULING: If a player is injured or apparently injured, an umpire should accompany the team representative to determine if this stoppage of play is indeed for injury. Discussions on strategy or coaching for either team should not take place during this “discovery time” so one umpire should hover and observe the discovery and the other(s) should be attentive to the other coaches and prevent a conference. If the discovery time noted above is brief and ends in no medical attention needed, it is umpire’s judgment as to if both teams can use any time during the suspension. The principle here is no unfair advantage to either team. Examples where no coaching discussions would be allowed are a player quickly getting to her feet and walking off a cramp or catching her breath for a few seconds. However if it is an obvious injury where the umpire will beckon the medical staff, or if it is determined to be an injury requiring some intervention, then yes, while the injured player is being tended to, both the offense and defense can use the time to talk strategy without it being a charged conference and base runners are not restricted to their bases.
In any case, once the medical staff is done, if either team wants to continue the conversation, it will then be a charged conference. See also Rule 6.10.4.3.2 and 6.10.5.3.2

A.R.6.10.2^4: The plate umpire is hit with a foul ball and requires time to walk off the injury. The defensive coach, without requesting a suspension in play, goes out to talk to the pitcher during the delay.
RULING: Conferences during a suspension of play for an injury (see A.R.6.10.2^1) would also apply to an umpire’s injury which means conference/no conference would be at the discretion of the umpires. Failure to ask if the coach may speak to the defense puts the coach in jeopardy of being charged a conference. In any case, if the umpires are ready to resume play and either team wishes to have more time, a conference would be charged to that team.

A.R.6.10.4^1: After seeing her pitcher complete her warm-up prior to the start of the inning, the pitching coach gives the pitcher last minute instructions while the plate umpire is cleaning the plate and before the batter steps into the batter's box. The offensive coach believes the defense should to be charged with a conference.
RULING: Since the pitching coach did not suspend play, this should not be a charged conference. Many times coaches remain at the circle and talk to the pitcher or defense during warm-up pitches or until the plate umpire is ready to resume play.

A.R.6.10.4^2: Following a game changing play, the defensive head coach comes to the umpire to make a series of substitutions and then meets with the catcher to exchange the insert in her wrist band used for signaling in pitch selection. Is this a charged conference?
RULING: During suspension of play for the administration of a substitution, both teams may hold uncharged conferences provided they are ready to resume play when the umpire has completed the substitution responsibilities. Base runners are restricted to their bases during this time unless either team chooses to be charged with a substitution.

A.R.6.10.4^3: An assistant coach sprints on the field for a second conference in an inning, delivers the needed message to the pitcher and fielder(s). The umpire attempts to stop the coach but is avoided and therefore the assistant coach is ejected per 6.10.3. Two batters later, the same thing happens with the same defensive team, another assistant coach sprints out with the same results--delivered message and ejection. What recourse is there to prevent the defense from taking advantage of excess conferences by sending out ancillary personnel to deliver messages and then be ejected?
RULING: Ideally, as a team representative approaches the field for a second conference, the umpire will prevent the excessive conference and therefore not have to eject the offender. In the event preventative umpiring does not prevent the situation, the offender should be immediately ejected and every effort made to prevent delivery of any messages sent from the dugout to the field.
Under Rule 15.2, umpires clearly have not only the authority to order a coach to do or refrain from doing an unsportsmanlike act as this but also obligates them to conduct the game under conditions conducive to fair play. Therefore, upon ejection of either coach, the head coach can be warned that the willful disregard for the rules will not be tolerated. (See also Rule 13.1)
At this point of warning, there are several options. One is simply to remind the coach that each ejection carries with it an incident report to the NCAA. Another is that should it happen again, the head coach may be ejected for unsportsman behavior. A third is to warn the head coach that a forfeit may be declared. (See also 6.19.1.5 and 15.2.)

A.R.6.10.4^4: Is it a charged conference if a coach comes out to the pitcher's plate to hear the explanation regarding or to question the umpire about an illegal pitch?
RULING: If the initial conversation is between the coach and umpire, it would not be a charged conference even though pitcher later participated in the conversation. But if the coach addressed anything other than the illegal pitch or pitching mechanics with any member of the defense including the pitcher, it would be a charged conference. Lastly, if the coach talks first to the pitcher and then to the umpire, it is most likely a charged conference because a coaching conversation occurred.
A.R.6.10.4^5: The defensive head coach comes onto the field to speak with the base umpire regarding a possible obstruction call at second base. The conversation was lengthy, so meanwhile the team’s pitching coach came out and spoke with the pitcher. The latter conversation was concluded and the pitching coach was back in the dugout before the head coach and base umpire’s conversation concluded.

RULING: While the conversation between the umpire and coach allows an offensive coach to talk with his/her players without it being a charged offensive conference, it is a defensive conference if another defensive coach chooses to confer with defenders. Although that might appear unfair, the reason for the disparity is the opportunity for abuse. If a coach wanted to deliver a message to the defense, he/she would only need to send another representative to ask an umpire a meaningless question and then could deliver the message without using the team’s allowable conference. Therefore, to protect the integrity of the game, the defense would be assessed a conference in this case.

A.R.6.10.4^6: Similar to A.R.6.10.4^5, a defensive coach engages the umpire in recording position changes by the three outfielders while the pitching coach goes out to talk to the pitcher. The latter conversation was concluded and the pitching coach was back in the dugout before the plate umpire was finished recording and reporting the defensive changes. Just as play was about to resume, the defensive coach tells the umpire to disregard the changes just reported and that the team was reverting back to the original positions.

RULING: Uncharged conferences are allowed during the reporting of substitutions but the defensive team no longer has made any lineup changes so the plate umpire shall notify the head coach that a conference is being charged. If a conference has previously occurred in the inning, the pitching coach will be ejected if the coach does not retain at least one of the lineup changes initially reported.

A.R.6.10.4^7: The pitching coach holds a conference to confer with the pitcher. During the conference, the third baseman puts on a catcher’s helmet/mask and the shortstop threw underhand to her near third base. One batter later, the coach switches the pitcher with the shortstop and the substitute pitcher throws five warm-up pitches. Can the player who just left the pitching position (and became the shortstop) throw overhand to the first baseman or underhand to the third baseman who again uses her catcher’s helmet /mask while play is suspended for the substitute pitcher to throw her warm-up pitches?

RULING: The rule book is silent on the actions of other players while a coach uses the team’s allowable conference. Because the throws on the infield did not delay the game and in the interest of student-athlete welfare and allowing a player to suitably warm-up, it is allowable. If the substitute pitcher had been on the bench, she would have been able to use the bullpen so she is not getting an advantage another player would not have had. Also, in the interest of student-athlete welfare, the new shortstop may throw during the suspension of play while the new pitcher is throwing her warm-up pitches. That said though, the fielders must be ready to play when the umpire is ready to resume the game. (See also Rule 6.5.2.)

A.R.6.10.5^1: Following an offensive conference earlier in the inning, the offensive coach substitutes for the batter. After a pitch and before stepping back in the batter’s box, the batter asks for time and bolts to the coaching box to talk. The plate umpire cannot get the batter’s attention to prevent her from conferring with the base coach for a second conference in the inning.

RULING: The team representative(s) or player(s) who holds another charged conference in an inning shall be immediately ejected so in this case, the batter is ejected.

A.R.6.10.5^2: With no base runners on base, the batter hits a double. After the play is over, the defensive players request and are granted time to meet in the circle. The first base coach runs out to second base to give the base runner a piece of gum, and says “good job”. (Apparently she gives everyone a piece of gum who earns a hit.) The coach for the defensive team believed this constitutes an offensive conference.

RULING: Although play was suspended for the defense, it was not a charged defensive conference so the base coach could be charged with an offensive conference when she steps across the foul line. By not asking the umpire’s approval, the coach is subject to judgment of the umpire on if it is or is not a conference. Had she run out to make an equipment change such as retrieving a batting guard or to exchange a helmet with a face guard to one without, she would qualify for the exception in Rule 6.10.5.3.2d. But running on the field even just to say good job could constitute a conference.

A.R.6.10.5^4: When defensive players huddle in the circle and no defensive conference is charged, the base runners may not abandon the vicinity of their bases, but may the batter confer with the third base coach as long as she is ready to play when the umpire is ready to resume play?

RULING: Yes, the restriction in 6.10.5.4 only applies to base runners on base, not to the batter.

Series

A.R.6.12: An athletic conference which used to play doubleheaders has now switched to single game series. 6.12.3 requires completion of the first game of a doubleheader before the second game begins; does that apply to the series format as well where the first game must be completed before the second one started?

RULING: Yes, the intent of the rule is to complete what has been started before starting another game. A halted game could commence at the scheduled game time for the successive game or could be completed prior to the scheduled start time at the discretion of the on-site administrator in consultation with the umpires and opposing coaches.
Game Ending Procedures

A.R.6.15.1: Use of the tie breaker in the eighth inning was determined in the pregame meeting. At the top of the eighth inning, the scoreboard mistakenly shows seventh inning and play was normal. Before the home team comes to bat in the bottom half of the inning, a tiebreaker runner goes to second base. As soon as the tiebreaker runner goes on the field, the visiting coach argues that since the scoreboard was incorrect and since they did not put a tiebreaker runner on base, the tiebreaker should not be used until the next full inning. What is the right call? Lastly, if the visiting coach noticed the mistake after the top of the inning started, could a tie-breaker runner be placed on second base for whatever remained of the half inning?

RULING: Since use of the tiebreaker in the eighth inning was agreed upon in the pregame meeting, the home coach is allowed to place the tiebreaker runner on base even though the visiting coach did not. It is the coach’s responsibility to place the correct base runner on base at the appropriate time regardless of the information on the scoreboard. In not doing so, the visiting coach has disadvantaged his/her team by violating the rule but the home team should not be similarly disadvantaged in not being able to place a tiebreaker runner on base at the agreed upon time. So although it may appear to be unfair, the home team should not be penalized for a mistake by the visiting team and the decision is not protestable because it is not contrary to the rules. Even if the visiting team notices the mistake once its offensive half inning has begun, it is not correctable until the start of the next half inning.

Short comment on preventative umpiring—because of the serious ramifications of an incorrect or unreported substitute base runner being placed into the tiebreaker and in this case, no runner at all, it is good preventative umpiring to confer with both coaches as to who they are sending onto the field and determine that they are indeed the correct base runners. This verification is not considered to have crossed the line into coaching by an umpire.

A.R.6.16.2: At the end of five innings the score is 3-2 in favor of the visiting team. In the top of the sixth inning, the visitors score 3 more runs and lead 6-2. In the bottom of the sixth inning, the home team has the bases loaded with no outs at the time lightning is detected. Due to impending darkness (sunset in ten minutes), the game is called rather than halted. What is the score and what stats are counted?

RULING: In a little known rule, the score is actually 6-2 and all action is recorded as played because reverting back to the last complete inning does not change the outcome of the game. (See also Rule 14.33.1.)

A.R.6.17.4: In an athletic conference that uses the halted game rule, the home team is ahead 1-0 going into the bottom of the fifth inning. Lightning is detected which halts the game immediately. 1) The lightning continued until dark making the resumption of play impossible; 2) The game is resumed after a thirty minute delay but the storm reappears in the top of the sixth inning and continues until dark with the score still 1-0.

RULING: 1) This is an example of a game that is both halted and regulation so because it cannot be continued, regulation takes precedence and the game is declared a victory for the home team. 2) This is an example of a halted game that is able to be resumed but then becomes halted again before conditions become unplayable. It too is both halted and regulation and declared a victory for the home team in the sixth inning.

Appeals

A.R.7.1.1.2*1: With base runners on first and third bases and one out, the batter hits a ball down the foul line that rolls all the way to the home run fence. The base runner from third apparently scores, the trailing base runner arrives safely at third base but misses second base and the batter-runner misses first base but safely slides into second base. The defense appeals the two missed bases but does it matter which order they appeal in order to negate the run?

RULING: No, it does not matter because both missed bases were force outs. It is obvious if the lead runner’s missed base was appealed before the batter-runner, they would both be force outs but even if the appeals were in the opposite order, the result would be the same. The fact that the base runner from first base was forced to advance at the time she missed the base, makes her out a force as well. With both outs being force, the run does not score. Note-if a runner is forced to advance at the moment the base is missed, an appeal of that base will always be a force out but if the base missed was beyond the base to which she was forced, it is a timing play. See also Rules 6.1.3.1, 7.1.1.2.7, 12.26.8 and 14.7.1.3.

A.R.7.1.1.2*2: Base runners on first and third bases with one out. Batter apparently singles to right field plating the base runner from third base. The base runner who started on first base misses second base but arrives safely at third base. The batter-runner is thrown out at second base trying to advance (second out). The defense appeals that the base runner from first base missed second base (third out). Does the run score since she touched home before the appeal?

RULING: No. Since the third out is a force play at second base, not a timing play, the run does not score. (See also Rule 6.1.3.1.) In addition, because the base runner who started on first base did not successfully advance to the first base to which she was forced, the apparent single is actually scored as a fielder’s choice. (See also Rule 14.7.1.3.)

A.R.7.1.1.2.5: With two outs and a base runner on third base, the batter-runner puts the ball in play and runs through, but does not touch first base. The base runner from third base touches home plate before the first baseman tags the batter-runner and appeals the missed base. Does the run score?

RULING: Even though a runner is considered to have touched a base at the time she passes it, the exception is when an appeal is made. Because the batter-runner was out on an appeal of missing first base, it is a force and the run does not score. See also Rule 6.1.3.1.
A.R. 7.1.1.3: Base runner on first base takes off on the hit and run. She hits second base and is on her way to third base as the outfielder makes a diving catch for the first out of the inning. The outfielder jumps to her feet and overthrows the ball into the first base dugout (the runner is now half way between third and second bases as the ball leaves the fielder's hand). 1) What is the proper call? 2) During the dead ball or as the umpire awards the runner additional bases, if the runner attempts to return to tag up at first base, should the umpire stop the runner?
RULING: 1) Dead ball, the runner is awarded two bases (third base). BUT she never tagged up and by rule, she cannot return to touch a base if she is on a base beyond the base she left too soon when the ball becomes dead. So if the defensive coach appeals she never tagged up, you have an second out. 2) Stopping the runner and pointing out she cannot return during the dead ball advantages the defense into making an appeal they might otherwise not have noticed. Notice the re-touch but let the appeal or lack thereof take its course without stopping the runner. (See also Rule 12.27.4.3)

A.R.7.1.1.4: The defensive team inaccurately lists their pitcher or catcher, when are they considered to have made a play?
RULING: Both throwing and receiving a pitch are considered having made a play. The offensive coach may bring the error to the attention of the umpire and request nullification of the results of the last pitch. Strategy might dictate waiting until the penalty will be more advantageous however the defensive team also has the ability to correct its own mistake without penalty. (See also Rule 8.3.2.)

A.R.7.1.2.2.3: Bottom of the seventh inning of a tied game with no one on base and no one out. The batter hits an out-of-the-park home run but misses home plate. She accepts her teammate's congratulations at the plate and then creates the line to shake hands with her opponents without ever leaving the field. As the defensive players begin walking in to the infield to shake hands, the defensive coach tells the first baseman to tell her teammates to stay on the field and get a ball from the umpire. Hearing this, the offensive coach knows they are going to appeal a missed base so she has her player run the bases in reverse order and then the proper order which she does before the defense was able to make the dead ball appeal. Is there anything the defense can do to appeal without tipping off the offense?
RULING: By rule, a runner may not return to touch a missed base if she has touched the final base of her award (see Rule 12.22.5.5) so the only base she can return to on an out-of-the-park home run is home plate. In this case, the offensive head coach is obviously unaware of the rule and unsure of which base was missed so the player is directed to touch all bases in reverse order and then the proper order. At the moment the runner touches home plate as the beginning of her run to touch the bases in reverse order, the umpire could declare her safe and prevent the rest of her run around the bases. But if that does not happen and the runner proceeds, there is no penalty. By rule, with the ball out of play, the defense cannot appeal a missed base until the ball is put back in play, the defense is in position and the next batter summoned to the batter's box. But since this was a game ending play, the reality is the runner will always be able to return to touch home plate before the defense can properly appeal.

Protests
A.R.7.2: Can a coach protest misapplication of a ground rule? For example, 1) a drainage area or other hazard that is ruled out of play during the pre-game meeting with coaches, but when a play occurs in that area, the umpire allows play to continue; 2) on a playing field where an imaginary out-of-play line is established by the umpire during the pre-game meeting, but a coach knows it to be incorrect, then waits for a play to occur in order to challenge the ruling.
RULING: Yes, a coach can protest any misapplication of a rule, even an established ground rule. In 1) the offensive coach may protest that the established ground rule was not applied and in 2) while a misapplication of a rule is protestable, it is probably in both coaches’ best interest to have the effect corrected at the pregame meeting when it is first discovered to be incorrect. Both teams are equally vulnerable to application of an incorrect effect so there is no competitive advantage in withholding the information.

A.R.7.2.1: With base runners on first and second bases and one out, a ground ball is hit to the second baseman. She fields the ball and attempts to tag the base runner forced to advance to second base. The base runner retreats toward first base and successfully avoids the tag but the umpire incorrectly calls the base runner out for backing up. The second baseman continues the play by throwing out the batter-runner; inning over. Immediately after the play, the umpires confer and discuss the mistake but are unsure how to rectify it.
RULING: Despite the goal of trying to “get the call right”, the umpires should not confer and attempt to correct the mistake. The play now becomes the responsibility of the offensive team to protest that the correct rule was not applied and then the umpires would confer and rectify the situation. If a proper appeal is not made, the play stands. If the offensive team does protest, the decision is corrected and the game resumed with two outs and base runners on second and third bases. Note- If the umpire declared “dead ball”, the base runner is out on the attempted tag, then the result of the play is two outs, the base runner from second base remains at third base and the batter-runner is on first base.

A.R.7.2.5: During a regular season tournament, can a protest committee exist to facilitate protest resolutions?
RULING: Yes a committee can exist to offer assistance to the umpires working a game under protest however it would be purely advisory. In the event the resolution by the game umpires is unsatisfactory, the protesting coach would retain the ability to protest to the softball secretary- rules editor however the input from the committee might resolve the discrepancy without needing that latter, final step of a written protest. The only time a protest committee has authority to overturn the game umpire’s ruling on the field is during an NCAA qualifying event (see Rule 7.2.6).
A.R.7.2.5.3.5: If a player is ejected in a protested game that is eventually found to be a valid protest, can the player participate in the resumed game?
RULING: If she was ejected and then the game was protested, later ruled valid, and resumed from the time of the mistake, she remains ejected for the resumption of the game. If the game was protested and then she was ejected, the protest ruled valid and resumed from the time of the mistake, she is still in the game because anything after the moment of the mistake is invalidated.

Players

SOFTBALL WHYS- Most codes allow teams to complete a game shorthanded but NCAA teams without sufficient eligible players must forfeit the game. With ticket sales and electronic media broadcasts, doesn’t it seem prudent to allow a game in progress to continue even if one team is shorthanded?
RULING Foundation: Rule 8.1.1.
COMMENT: You make a good point regarding the following some teams have but playing shorthanded rarely leads to quality competition. When a team has to take an automatic out, that makes the three players who precede her in the batting order vulnerable to intentional walks in order to get to the automatic out. For example, with a two out runner on third base, the defense can walk two batters in order to get to the automatic out and end the inning. Fans want to see whether or not the runner can score, not the bases loaded via walks and then the inning ended on a shorthanded out.

A.R.8.1.1: 1) The first baseman plays directly behind second base (up the middle) and the defense doesn’t position anybody in the first baseman’s traditional position. 2) The same alignment as in the previous example; however the person who was the third baseman is behind second (up the middle) and the person who was the first baseman is where the traditional third baseman is. 3) The right fielder moves to shallow left field, the left fielder moves to deep left field and right field is left vacant. Has there been a defensive position change in any of these cases?
RULING: 1) There has been no change…by rule, the first baseman can be positioned anywhere in fair territory. This is a positioning issue rather than a reportable change. 2) This is an example of a change that must be reported in that the first and third baseman have switched positions so for the sake of accurate scoring and deference to the opposing coach, it is vital information. If not done, apply the effect for 8.1.2.8. 3) This is a positioning issue similar to the first example rather than an exchange of positions. Note-in the interest of accuracy and giving players credit for their play, it would be helpful if coaches always informed the umpire of positioning changes and defensive switches so there would never be a rule violation. However, by rule, coaches must only report the switching of defensive positions.

A.R.8.1.1.2: In the resumption of a halted game, one team is using DP/Flex but has exhausted all available substitutes. The left fielder becomes incapacitated during warm-ups. Does that mean the game is immediately forfeited or may play begin shorthanded?
RULING: The coach of the shorthanded team has two options. If the coach does not want to play, a forfeit is declared at the pregame meeting when it is determined the team does not have a left fielder to enter on the lineup card. The other option is to enter the DP to play left field and continue to bat in the same position of the batting order (so there is no substitution). The original left fielder is still in the batting order but is otherwise in the dugout. When the left fielder’s position in the batting order comes up, she could enter the batter’s box, assuming she is physically capable of doing so. She can stand in the box and take pitches without the intent to get on base, but if her spot in the order is unfilled, the team will have to forfeit as there is no provision for playing shorthanded. In this case, the forfeit does not actually occur until the position in the batting order comes up because there is the possibility the game would be stopped for some other reason before that spot comes up, such as the mercy rule invoked, inclement weather, an action of the opponent that halts the game, etc.

DP/Flex

A.R.8.2.1: If the starting DP gets on base and is replaced by the Flex to run the bases twice in a single game, the DP is then unable to play for its remainder (starter who has re-entered). If that position (the one the DP originally occupied but the Flex currently holds) in the batting order comes up again, may the coach substitute for the DP even though there has been no one in that position for some time or must he/she substitute for the Flex?
RULING: Once the starting lineup is created with a DP and Flex, those positions exist throughout the game even if one of them is temporarily vacant or inactive. The Flex who entered the game to run for the DP is still the Flex and retains all those rights. The DP position still exists and a substitute may be entered in that spot in the batting order. The number of available (but not necessarily in use) positions never changes…there are either nine or 10 and that cannot change throughout the course of the game. The coach may decide whether to substitute for the DP or Flex based on which player is needed in the lineup or which starter should retain her remaining eligibility. However, the reason, it is imperative the coach articulates which player the substitute is for and that that decision is clearly passed along to the scorer and opposing coach.

A.R.8.2.2: The Flex enters the game in the clean-up spot in the batting order for the DP at the start of the game dropping the number of active players in the game from 10 to nine. Two innings later, the coach wants to return to 10 players by entering a substitute into the clean-up spot in the batting order but coach does not want the substitute to go into the lineup as the Flex. Must the coach re-enter the starting DP into the clean-up spot and then put the substitute in for her or can the coach put the substitute directly in the DP spot that the Flex is vacating when she goes back to playing defense only?
RULING: The substitute may be entered directly into the clean-up spot in the batting order without having to re-enter the starting DP. The number of active players in the game can go from 10 to nine and back to 10 but cannot start at nine and go to 10.
**A.R.8.2^3:** One team begins the game with the DP/Flex. Does the Flex have to play defense at all times or can the Flex sit on the bench for the first three innings and then come in and play defense in the fourth inning?

**RULING:** The Flex is listed in the tenth spot on the lineup card in any defensive position and can be defensively replaced by the DP (which puts her on the bench). At some later time, she can re-enter the game to play defense only or she can re-enter defensively for herself and offensively for the DP.

**Inaccurate Player**

**A.R.8.3.2^1:** A team lists two players as F8 and no one as F9 on the lineup card. An opposing batter hits a fly ball to F8 which is caught. The opposing coach brings the situation to the attention of the plate umpire. In order to get the maximum penalty, should the coach have waited until F9 made a play and then appealed?

**RULING:** This situation should not happen since the coach has looked over the line-up for accuracy as has the plate umpire. So it should be rectified with no penalty at the pregame meeting. But assuming it was not, if brought to the attention of the umpire at the time of the catch by the center fielder, the lineup card will accurately reflect the player’s name and it will say F8…nothing wrong. But if the right fielder makes a play and it is immediately brought to the umpire’s attention, then the effect in 8.3.2 would apply because there is no right fielder listed on the lineup card.

**A.R.8.3.2^2:** A player is wearing uniform number 7 and is listed correctly in the hand written batting order but is listed as number 18 in the pre-printed roster on the bottom of the card.

**RULING:** The hand written lineup would take precedence and in this situation, a correction to the pre-printed roster would be made but no other action. HOWEVER if the player were a substitute or if the numbers were reversed (she is wearing number 7, is listed on the written lineup as number 18 but on the printed lineup as 7), that becomes an inaccurate lineup.

**A.R.8.3.2^3:** A team does not list first names of its players on its lineup card as submitted to the umpires at the pre-game meeting. Later in the game, one of its players hits a two-run home run which causes the opposing coach to immediately bring the inaccurate lineup to the attention of the umpire. Should the umpires have returned the lineup for correction at the pre-game meeting (preventative umpiring) or waited to enforce the penalty when brought to their attention?

**RULING:** If the umpires notice any required information was omitted (no first name, DP without a Flex, no substitutes, etc) from the line-up card, the card should be returned and corrected without penalty at the pregame meeting. If though, it went unnoticed, the umpires would enforce 8.3.2 when the violation is brought to their attention.

**A.R.8.3.2^4:** In the pregame meeting, a coach informs the plate umpire that he is going to protest the spelling of one of the player’s last names on the line-up card at some time during the game. The player’s name is spelled incorrectly on the hand written line-up, but is correctly printed on the roster at the bottom of the line-up card. Since the error is brought to the umpire’s attention in the pregame meeting, is it corrected immediately (without penalty) or not acted upon until the coach requests action? Second, since the name on the roster is correct and there is only one person with this last name is it still an inaccurate line-up?

**RULING:** Although the hand written line-up takes precedence over the printed roster if there is a discrepancy, this is a case where the result might be determined by the confusion caused by the mistake. If there are two players on the team named Smith and Smythe and the name on the card is written Smyth, there’s a better case for applying the penalty than if Jones is misspelled Janes and she is the only one player whose name starts with J. The benefit of the doubt should go to not penalizing the team if no confusion results or if the writing is difficult to read but the roster at the bottom of the line-up card is clear. That said though, technically this is an inaccurate line-up card which should be ruled on and failure to impose the penalty is protestable.

As to the timing, the umpire should ask the coach if he is now bringing this to the attention of the umpires here in the pregame meeting or not. If yes, it can be corrected immediately without penalty, if no, then it can be corrected by the offending team anytime or the coach may bring it to the umpire’s attention when it best advantages his team.

**A.R.8.3.2^5:** A coach substitutes #5 for #20 at bat, but #5 is wearing her road uniform which is #6. On the first pitch to the substitute batter, the base runner on first base steals second base. When the ball is returned to the pitcher, the opposing coach informs the umpire that #6 is batting although #5 was the reported substitute.

**RULING:** When substitutions are made they should be #5 Smith for #20 Jones and as the umpire makes the change on the lineup card, the discrepancy will be noticed and the substitution not allowed without correction of either the number or name. In the unlikely event that it is still undetected, using this process does establish that the substitute was Smith for Jones which in fact is what happened on the field and makes the violation an inaccurate lineup. Smith was reported and is playing, she simply has the wrong number on the lineup card. However if there is both a #5 and #6 available to play and no names are reported, then having #6 in the game when #5 was reported is a misreported substitute and subject to Rule 8.3.3. In either case, the advance of the base runner is legal.
A.R.8.3.3*1: Both teams present line-ups at the pre-game meeting with the DP/Flex properly listed and the pitcher listed as the Flex. No line-up changes are reported and the game begins with the home team’s DP in the pitching position. The first pitch is called a ball, the second pitch resulted in a groundball out to the shortstop. The offensive coach brings the unreported entry to the plate umpire’s attention.

RULING: The pitcher is considered having made a play when she delivers a pitch so the effect is “No Pitch” and the last play is nullified resulting in the leadoff batter returning to the batter’s box with a 1-0 count. Note- The pitcher and catcher are considered having made a play when they pitch and catch respectively so the same result would apply if it were the catcher, rather than the pitcher, who was unreported.

A.R.8.3.3*2: #2 is the base runner on second base, #1 is on first base with no one out. The offensive coach reports a substitution of #4 to run for #2 and as the umpire administers the change, the coach talks to the batter, the substitute and the original two base runners. When the offense breaks the huddle, #4 replaces the trailing runner (#1) instead of lead runner (#2) as reported. What is the remedy when properly appealed before the next pitch?

RULING: The remedy will depend on the question posed to the umpire by the defensive team. If the defense asks “is #2 supposed to be at second base?” You have an unreported reentry. #4 was officially reported as a substitute for #2 however #2 can reenter for her own substitute (assuming she had not been out of the game already). Impose the penalty for unreported player as determined by the time of the report. If the defense asks “is #4 supposed to be at first base?” #4 is an illegal player. She was not a starting player and was officially entered as a substitute for #2. She cannot enter the game a second time (as a substitute for #1) so impose the penalty for illegal player as determined by the time of the report. If the defense asks “are both players incorrect?” impose both penalties as determined by the time of the report. (See also Rule 8.3.4.)

A.R.8.3.3*3: #2 is the base runner on second base with no one out. The offensive coach reports a substitution of #4 for #2. The umpire repeats it, records it on the lineup card and announces the change to the defensive coach. After the next pitch, the defensive coach notices the runner on second base was #5 (not #4 as reported) and brings it to the attention of the umpire.

RULING: #4 has been officially entered into the game and #5 is an unreported substitute for her which renders #4 out of the game permanently (as a substitute without re-entry rights). The effect is no pitch, the unreported player is out and declared officially in the game. Although there is no one on base, #5 remains in the line-up and #2 retains her re-entry rights if she was a starter.

A.R.8.3.5.3: In the bottom of the fifth inning, the leadoff batter singles safely to centerfield. Before the next pitch, the defensive head coach notifies the plate umpire that the batter was listed as the left fielder but actually played centerfield the previous half inning. The coach contends inaccurate lineup applies. Is that true?

RULING: The player batted in the correct spot in the batting order, her name and uniform number were correctly listed however her defensive position was incorrect for where she played the previous half inning. The player has made an unreported exchange of her defensive position. To gain the maximum effect, the opposing coach could wait until the player makes a play on defense but in bringing it to the umpire’s attention while the player was at bat. The effect is she is declared in the game.

A.R.8.3.4*1: In the fourth inning #1, the first baseman, substitutes for #4 on offense. #4 advances to third base when #1 re-enters. The inning ends and as the pitcher is warming up, the opposing coach sees that #4, who has no re-entry rights, is warming up the infielders at first base. Apparently #4 came out on her own so the coach returns her to the dugout and tells #1 to resume her position playing first base. Since the ball was dead, is there any penalty? Second, if #4 became an illegal substitute when she went to play first base, does her illegal re-entry result in #1 being out of the game?

RULING: Since the coach did not mistakenly report #4 returning and since the ball was not live, there is no illegal substitution; #1 was legally re-entered as the runner on third base and is still in the game. It is not illegal for a player to go to take throws at first base or catch warm-up pitches while the player in the lineup gets ready between innings as long as there are no more than four infielders (to meet Rule 6.5.6).

A.R.8.3.4*2: The Flex bats in a spot in the batting order other than the DP’s spot and before the next pitch, the defense appeals to the umpire for a batting out-of-order violation. They are correct in that the previous batter is not the correct batter but she is an illegal player, not a legal player guilty of batting out-of-order. Should the umpire act on the appealed batting out-of-order or enforce the penalty for illegal player?

RULING: A coach making an appeal must reasonably identify the rule violation in question. While not required to identify the rule by number or page, the player and terminology for the rule in question have to be correctly communicated to the umpire. To avoid miscommunication, the plate umpire should show the defensive coach the lineup card and have him/her walk through the complaint giving the coach every opportunity to see the mistake and better articulate the appeal. In the unlikely event that the coach still only appeals batting out-of-order, the plate umpire shall enforce the effect for the appealed batting out-of-order. (See also Rule 11.10.)
Substitutes

A.R.8.5.1*: In mid-inning, the defensive coach makes a substitution for the catcher (straight substitution; no injury) followed immediately by an offensive substitution of a pinch hitter. The substitute catcher comes on the field and asks to receive warm-up pitches during the plate umpire’s paperwork. The base umpire grants the request and the pitcher throws two warm-up pitches. The offensive coach objects to the two pitches and demands two balls be assessed for illegal warm-up pitches.

RULING: Without an injury, there is no rulebook support for allowing warm-up pitches to an incoming catcher during a substitution without the standard consequence of awarding balls to the batter. However, the plate umpire shall not set aside the decision of the base umpire to allow the additional pitches and therefore there is no penalty for this apparent rule violation. (See also Rule 15.2.8.) Note that the substitute catcher would be allowed to play catch while the plate umpire was administering the substitution because it is the pitcher who is restricted from throwing warm-up pitches during the substitution paperwork.

A.R.8.5.1*: Without being reported, a substitute steps into the batter’s box for the clean-up hitter to start the second inning. Before a pitch is thrown, the coach decides to substitute a different player for the clean-up hitter. Is this still a substitution for the clean-up hitter or is it now a substitution for the substitute who entered the batter’s box?

RULING: Because the player who stepped in the batter’s box was unreported and no pitch had been thrown, she never officially entered the game. Therefore when the coach reports a change, the substitution would be for the clean-up hitter.

A.R.8.5.1.2: Prior to the start of a half inning, the offensive coach reports two line-up changes to the plate umpire- the leadoff batter in the inning will now be #11 for #1 and the on-deck batter will be #12 for #2.

RULING: The umpire should accept the reported change for the batter but the projected substitution for the on-deck batter is not allowed until #11 completes her turn at bat. Because any offensive player may occupy the on-deck circle, it is not considered a position in the line-up for which substitutions are accepted.

A.R.8.5.2: A relief pitcher may throw not more than the allowable number of throws/warm-up pitches except if the pitching change is necessitated by an injury. NFHS does not allow the injured pitcher to re-enter if her substitute uses more than five warm-up pitches. What about the NCAA?

RULING: The injured pitcher is not precluded from re-entering at any time as long as she can legally re-enter (i.e. was not a substitute herself or as a starter, previously used her one allowable re-entry). Unlike the NFHS, the previously injured player is entitled to resume her pitching duties even if her replacement was granted more than five warm-up pitches.

Defense

Catch/No Catch

A.R.9.1: A fielder makes a shoestring catch and immediately lifts her glove in the air over her head to show the umpire that she has possession of the ball. As she does so, the ball trickles out the palm of her glove and lands on the ground. Since release was not voluntary, is it still a catch?

RULING: Yes, because the ball landed on the ground as a result of a secondary move and not as part of the action of the catch, she has completed the catch. Secondary moves include throwing the ball, transferring the ball from glove to throwing hand and demonstrating possession to the umpire.

A.R.9.1.4*: While tracking a sky-high foul ball, the shortstop runs into a chalked, dead ball area created for photographers along the third base sideline fence. She jumps in the air, and catches the ball as it drifts over the sideline fence.

RULING: No catch, foul ball because the defender was in dead ball territory and never reestablished herself in live ball territory before gloving the batted ball.

A.R.9.2: An outfielder, trying to catch a batted fly ball near the homerun fence, has the ball in her glove, subsequently knocks down the portable fence and loses possession of the ball as she lands on the displaced fence.

RULING: It is not a catch since the fielder did not control and voluntarily release the ball (the ground caused the ball to be dropped). The ball was over the fence in fair territory and so it is a homerun. In specific circumstances, the umpire could judge that the fielder had control of the ball long enough to establish a catch. For example, a fielder making the catch, taking a step or two and falling over a short fence thus dropping the ball as she attempts to "catch herself" and protect her face. While the release was not voluntary, the catch clearly occurred before going out of play and making a secondary move of trying to protect herself. In this situation, the catch would be good, the batter would be out, the ball would be dead, and all runners would be advanced one base from the time the ball entered dead-ball territory on the catch and carry. (See also Rule 9.3.)
A.R.9.2.2: The batter hits a ground ball fielded and thrown to first base. The first baseman catches and has control of the ball while in contact with the base. Seconds after the catch and while being declared out, the batter-runner unintentionally knocks the ball out of the first baseman’s glove.

**RULING:** In order for a force out to be recorded, the first baseman must only control both the ball and her body demonstrating possession at the time of contact with the base. In this case, it sounds like that occurred although the release of the ball was not voluntary and no secondary move was attempted when the ball dropped. Note however there is some room for judgment as to how immediate the ball was knocked out of the glove and whether or not it was unintentional so a safe call might be the right call.

A.R.9.2.6: The batter hits a line drive that deflects off the first baseman’s glove, strikes the base umpire which causes the ball to pop up in the air and allows the second baseman to catch the ball before it hits the ground.

**RULING:** No catch. The ball is live and treated as a ground ball when it rebounds off the umpire. (See also Rule 11.7.1.6.)

**Catch and Carry**

A.R.9.3*1: With a base runner on first base, the ball is hit to the third baseman who overthrows first base. The ball rolls in foul territory and stops right before the out-of-play chalk line at the entrance to the dugout. The right fielder, standing in foul territory, picks up the ball but fumbles it out-of-play. What is the base award?

**RULING:** Apply the catch and carry rule. Award both the batter and base runner one base from the base last legally touched at the time the fielder fumbled the ball out of play OR two bases if the umpires believe the fumble was intentional to prevent the run from scoring.

A.R.9.3*2: With base runners on first and second bases, a towering fly ball is hit near the temporary 4-foot home run fence. The base runners both advance half way to their next base and hold waiting to see if the fielder will make a catch. The outfielder makes the catch but then tumbles over the home run fence carrying the ball out of play. Both base runners advance on one base awards but never tagged up after the catch and are now standing on second and third bases.

**RULING:** Unless properly appealed for failing to tag when a fly ball is caught (see Rule 7.1.1.3 and 12.5.2 note), the base runners are on their proper bases for violation of the catch and carry rule.

**Obstruction**

A.R.9.4: With a base runner on second base, the batter hits a dying line drive between the shortstop and third base. The ball settles in for a hit. The base runner hesitates to see if the ball goes through, hesitates again and then advances toward third base. The base umpire also hesitates and as he begins to move, contacts the base runner who is then thrown out at third base. The batter-runner safely attains second base.

**RULING:** Although there are some rule references to umpire interference, there are no references to umpire obstruction when the offense is disadvantaged. While the contact is unfortunate, there is no rule relief so the base runner would be out as a result of the play and the batter-runner safe at second base. (See also Rule 9.7.1.3 Note)

A.R.9.5.1*1: The batter, in her pre-pitch stance, holds the bat straight across the plate and then brings it back to her shoulder to swing. On the play in question, she brings it back as the pitch is reaching the plate and in doing so, tips the catcher’s glove.

**RULING:** The primary principle is that the batter is entitled to one unobstructed swing at any pitch so if that is her normal motion, the catcher must stand back and allow her to bring her bat backward and then swing. That said, the play described is a timing play with the effect determined by the location of the pitch at the time of the contact. The batter is protected prior to the pitch reaching the plate or on her attempt to contact the pitch which means contact during those times would be catcher obstruction. Conversely, the catcher is protected after the pitch reaches the plate or if the batter was trying to draw an obstruction call while taking the pitch which means contact during those times would be batter interference. (See also Rule 11 Intro.)

A.R.9.5.1*2: Can an offensive team decline the base award and accept a strike on the batter when catcher obstruction occurs? For example, if the team’s best hitter is at bat with a base runner on third base and the coach wants that batter to hit rather than be awarded first base.

**RULING:** Yes, the offensive coach can choose the result of the play or the award of first base to the batter. So if the result of the play is a strike, the batter could still be in the batter’s box with the strike assessed.

A.R.9.5.1*3: The batter takes a stride position at the front of the batter’s box and, as the pitch is delivered, moves her rear foot backward toward the catcher to reclaim the batter’s box from the catcher who has legally moved forward. If there is batter-catcher contact, which player is penalized?

**RULING:** Since the only possible reason for striding backward is to hinder the catcher, this action is inconsistent with the spirit of the game and should not result in rewarding the batter. Note- the catcher may not obstruct, hinder or prevent the batter’s legitimate attempt to make contact with a pitch so movement by the batter that enhances her ability to contact the pitch is protected and results in catcher obstruction. The benefit of the doubt must go to the batter. (See also Rule 11.2.)
A.R.9.5.1^4: A batter swings at a pitch so late that the ball is in the catcher’s glove when bat/ball/glove contact is made.

RULING: This is a judgment call with the overriding principle that the batter is allowed one unobstructed swing at the pitch but tempered with the timing of the contact. If the catcher anticipates the pitch and reaches forward to catch the ball while it is over the plate, it is catcher obstruction. If the catcher catches the pitch well behind the plate and the purpose of the swing is to impede the catcher or the batter is so badly fooled by the speed of the pitch, that is batter interference. The goal is to penalize the violator but in the unlikely event both players are acting appropriately, it also could be simply a strike with no penalty. (See also Rule 11.21.)

A.R.9.5.2^1: Base runners are on first and second bases with no outs when a ground ball is hit into the pitcher’s circle that the pitcher fields and throws to third base for the force out. As the pitcher fields the ball, the shortstop (who is moving to field the ball near second base) and the base runner from second base collide, causing the lead runner to fall to the ground and eventually be retired at third base. Is there interference on the base runner for running into a fielder as she moved to field the ball even though the ball is cut off before getting to her or is the shortstop guilty of obstructing the base runner?

RULING: This rule protects the defender fielding the ball which means any other fielder impeding a base runner would be obstructing. In this case, because the pitcher was fielding the ball, she is the protected player so the shortstop is most likely guilty of obstruction and the runner would be awarded the base(s) she would have earned had obstruction not occurred. But obstruction is not the only possibility depending on the speed of the play and positions of the players. There is the possibility of a no call for inadvertent contact when the shortstop is the player likely to field the ball even though the pitcher miraculously snags it and both the defender and runner are acting appropriately. (See Rule 12.19.2 .1.d and 12.19.2.7.)

A.R.9.5.2^2: With base runners on first and second bases with two outs, the batter hits a ground ball to right field. The base runner from second base is obstructed going home as the throw is coming to the plate (she would clearly have scored). However she collides with the third baseman and manages to scramble safely back to third base. Meanwhile, the throw to the plate gets by the catcher. The catcher retrieves the ball and throws to third base in time to tag out the trailing runner who is also on third base. Can the run score even though there are three outs?

RULING: The lead runner scores on the base award for obstruction (the base she would have reached had there been no obstruction), the trailing runner is the third out at third base, and the batter-runner is left on base at the end of the inning.

A.R.9.5.2^3: With a base runner on second base, the batter hits a base hit to left field. As the base runner is rounding third base, she bumps into the third baseman and, instead of advancing towards home or returning to third base, she just stops and is tagged out.

RULING: The correct call is obstruction but the base award will be based on umpire judgment.

1) If the base runner rounded third base in the traditional play of rounding a base to evaluate the defensive play, then the effect of obstruction would be to negate the putout and award the base runner third base. The base runner did not make it apparent that she intended to advance home, she merely rounded the base. In these cases, the runner is awarded only the base she held prior to the putout and the effect for violation of rule 9.5.2.6 is assessed (i.e. warning and advance on subsequent violations).

2) On the other hand, if the base runner rounded third base and her actions demonstrated her intent to continue to home, then the effect of the obstruction would be to negate the out and award the base runner home. In this case, the base runner's action must convince the umpire she intended to advance by clues such as aggressively rounding the base, the speed of the play, her body language and/or by the effect of the contact. If she was obstructed in her pursuit of home (the base runner gets the benefit of doubt), award the additional base.

A.R.9.5.2^4: With a base runner on second base and two outs, the batter singles to the outfield. The base runner from second base collides with the third baseman but eventually progresses home. As the throw comes into the infield, it is cut off in the circle and a play is made on the batter-runner attempting second base. The third out is made at second base before the obstructed runner touches home.

RULING: On the obstruction call, the runner is awarded the base(s) she would have reached had there not been obstruction. If the umpire judges the runner would have scored before the third out was made, the run would score. If the umpire judges the runner would not have scored until after the tag at second, the run shall not score. Note-this is only possible on a timing play and would not be the case if the third out was a force out.

A.R.9.5.2.1: In defining “about to receive” a thrown or pitched ball, does that mean the fielder is no longer in jeopardy of committing obstruction beginning at the moment the ball is closer to the fielder than the runner is?

RULING: That is usually true but not always. The relationship between ball--fielder and runner--fielder determines “about to receive” which protects the fielder when she is acting appropriately but she would still be guilty of obstruction if she inappropriately initiated contact (for example, if she extends her foot backward to trip the runner who was running behind the fielder to avoid contact).
A.R.9.5.2.6^1: The first baseman has been warned for rounding obstruction in the previous inning. The batter hits a ground ball in the gap and as she rounds first base to see if she can advance, she is obstructed by the first baseman. The base umpire signals obstruction and mentally judges where the batter-runner would have advanced had obstruction not occurred. 1) The batter-runner returns to first base which is the base the umpire judged she would have reached; 2) the batter-runner safely slides into second base which is the base the umpire judged she would have reached and 3) the batter-runner boldly attempts third base, is easily thrown out and the umpire judged she would have only reached second base.

**RULING:** In 1) at the conclusion of the play, the umpire will award the batter-runner second base as the effect for a subsequent obstruction violation by the first baseman. In 2) the batter-runner safely advanced to the base the umpire judged she would have reached had there not been obstruction and because it was one base beyond the base where she was obstructed, there is no additional award. In 3) the batter-runner is out and there is no effect for the subsequent rounding obstruction. The batter-runner was only protected to second base but chose to attempt an additional base.

A.R.9.5.2.6^2: If a defender is warned for blocking a base while a base runner is rounding it, and in the following inning the same defender obstructs a different base runner returning to the base, are these two separate warnings?

**RULING:** Yes, now that rounding and returning have been separated into two different sections of 9.5.2, a warning given for one does not result in a warning for the other. Note-this interpretation has changed beginning with the 2014-2015 rule book.

A.R.9.5.2.6^3: If a defensive player commits a rounding or returning obstruction, would that defensive player still get a warning even if the batted fly ball was caught.

**RULING:** If the defensive player caught the fly ball, she would not be guilty of obstruction because she was playing the batted ball. If the player who obstructed is not the same as the one who caught the fly ball, then issue the warning to her for the unnecessary contact.

A.R.9.5.2.6^4: With a base runner on first base, the batter hits a long fly ball to deep left field close to the foul pole. The base runner advances watching for the catch while the second baseman moves to second base, also watching for the catch. The base runner attempts to round second, but is obstructed by the second baseman. Immediately after obstruction is signaled, the left fielder misses the catch and the ball falls foul in the corner.

**RULING:** At the time of the contact, it is a delayed dead ball and obstruction call. Then once the ball is dead, the base runner is returned to first base, a warning is issued to the second baseman and her coach is notified unless that player had previously been warned and then one base is awarded as detailed in 9.5.2 even though the ball ended up being an uncaught foul ball.

A.R.9.5.2.6^5: The third baseman obstructs a base runner returning to third base; her first violation in the game. Immediately after the play, a pinch runner is inserted and a pitching change is made which resulted in the warning being forgotten and not given to the third baseman. After the half inning ended, the umpire realized no warning had been given so issued it then to the coach and player. Is this a correctable error or if the warning is not appropriately given, is it no longer valid?

**RULING:** In the unfortunate circumstance that the warning was not given immediately, it should be given as soon as possible because subsequent obstruction violations will result in a base award. Ideally, the player and coach know and will adjust positioning but the umpire’s warning is important because it clarifies the type of obstruction called and the effect of subsequent violations.

A.R.9.5.2.7: With a base runner on second base, a base hit to left field sends the base runner toward home plate. The throw from the outfield is high, causing the catcher to jump to catch it and the base runner to run by home plate rather than slide, although she did not touch it. After several strides, the base runner stops, turns and as she returns to touch home plate, the catcher steps in front of her, altering her path to home plate. The pitcher retrieves the errant throw at the fence and throws the ball to the catcher to apply a tag before the base runner can touch home plate. The catcher is clearly guilty of obstruction but does the returning obstruction listed under fielder obstruction apply (Rule 9.5.2.7) or because it was the catcher, is the rule violation catcher obstruction?

**RULING:** The correct call would be under fielder obstruction because the catcher was acting as a fielder at the time. The base runner was legally advancing and attempting to correct her initial mistake of missing home plate when the catcher obstructed her. Although this is not a traditional returning obstruction, in order to protect a future base runner from being obstructed while another defender chases down a loose ball, the warning for a returning obstruction is issued.

**SOFTWARE WHYS** - The word “intentionally” has been removed in most places in the NCAA softball rule book but it remains as part of the rule regarding a base runner seeing the release of the pitch. First basemen are adept at being in the way without ever looking over their shoulders, hence appearing non-intentional, but this is still prohibiting the base runner from seeing the pitch release. Shouldn’t this violation always have a consequence?

**RULE FOUNDATION** - Rule 9.5.2.9

**COMMENT** - If the base runner is having difficulty seeing release of the pitch, the runner should ask the defensive player or the umpire to accommodate her ability to see. The umpire should intervene if he/she notices the base runner jockeying her position in order to see around the defender. If the defender complies, there is no issue but if it continues, then it is assumed to be intentional and will have a consequence. “Intentional” remains a part of the rule to prevent a base runner from “drawing the violation” by positioning herself behind an unsuspecting fielder and then innocently claiming not to be able to see.
A.R.9.5.3: How can detached defensive equipment interfere with a pitch? Wouldn’t it always have to be on a batted ball?

RULING: With a base runner on second base, the batter swings and misses a low, outside pitch. The pitch is knocked down by the catcher but rolls a few feet to her right. The catcher, watching the runner to prevent her from attempting to advance, whips off her mask and uses it to drag the ball toward her glove. The proper effect for this use of detached equipment is to award the base runner third base.

A.R.9.5.4: Two outs with base runners on first and third bases. The base runner from first base delay steals and arrives safely at second base. However, in the infielder’s first and third play, the shortstop takes the flip from the second baseman and, with excessive force, pushes the base runner off second base. The base umpire signals obstruction as the shortstop freezes the lead base runner and then, seeing the trailing base runner rolling on the ground and off the base, tags her. As the shortstop reaches down to make the tag, the lead runner from third base scores. At the conclusion of play, the base umpire calls the trailing base runner out, and awards the base runner second base on the obstruction. The defensive coach argues that it cannot be obstruction because the shortstop had the ball, that the out should stand, and the run voided because it occurred after the tag which was the third out.

RULING: The umpires made the correct call in awarding the affected base runner the base she would have had had she not been forcefully pushed off the base and in keeping the ball live to allow the offense to finish any intended play. However the effect in 9.5.4 also specifies that the offender, the shortstop, be ejected for using excessive force.

SOFTBALL WHYS- Negating a home run and calling the batter out for a rule violation by bench personnel seems a bit extreme so what is the committee’s thinking behind this new celebration restriction?

RULE FOUNDATION- Rule 9.6.3.2

COMMENT- The spontaneous excitement of an out-of-the-park homerun is an important part of the women’s game that the Softball Rules Committee does not want to curtail however it has becoming increasingly more difficult for the plate umpire to clearly see the runner(s) touch home plate as the dugout clears and players encircle the plate area. The intent of the rule is to allow players to continue to congregate to celebrate but to have them remain in foul territory which will allow an umpire in the middle of the field to have an unobstructed view of the run(s) scoring. Perhaps more controversial than the change itself is the effect for violating the rule. Realizing that there might be a learning curve for student-athletes coming out of the dugout and the reluctance of umpires to call a player out for the actions of a teammate, the effect for the first violation by a team in a game is merely a warning. However, subsequent violations by the same team in the same game result in the homerun hitter being declared out. While this is a significant penalty that no umpire wants to levy, it is the severity of the penalty that provides the incentive for student-athletes to learn and comply with the new rule, hence obtaining the desired effect of an unobstructed view of home plate for umpires, participants and video/television cameras.

A.R.9.6.3.1: In the top of the first inning, the leadoff batter reaches base safely and the second batter hits an out-of-the-park homerun. As the base runner rounds third base and is advancing home, the bat handler slaps high fives with her. In addition, the dugout clears and teammates completely surround home plate in foul territory to celebrate so as the base runner crosses home plate, there is nowhere to go but to stay in fair territory as she waits to congratulate the home run hitter as she scores.

RULING: Even though there are multiple rule violations of the rule, because the team has not yet received a warning, no one is declared out. Immediately after the batter-runner scores, the team is issued a warning for violation of rule 9.6.3 and reminded that any subsequent violation of either portion of the rule will result in outs. Note-if the team had previously been warned, two outs would be assessed—the base runner would be out in violation of 9.6.3.1 and the batter-runner would be out for the team’s violation of 9.6.3.2

A.R.9.6.3.2: After having been issued a team warning for the above situation in the previous inning, the same team has a batter hit an out-of-the-park homerun with a base runner on first base with two outs. The new bat handler slaps a high five with the batter before she touches home plate.

RULING: The batter will be the third out of the inning but the location of the violation is relevant to the scoring of runs and effect on the batter. If the new bat handler contacts the batter-runner along the first baseline before she touches first base, the batter-runner is immediately out and no run scores because the batter-runner had not safely attained first base. If the new bat handler contacts the batter-runner along the third baseline, the batter is credited with a triple and whether or not the preceding runner scores is a timing play. If the runner touches home plate before the contact with the batter-runner, the run will score but if not, the run will not score.

Interference

A.R.9.7.1: With a base runner on first base, the batter bunts the ball in front of home plate. The catcher fields the ball and is just about to throw when the plate umpire knocks the ball out of the catcher’s hand while pointing to indicate the ball was fair. Is that umpire interference even though the rule regarding umpire interference specifically refers to pick offs and steals?

RULING: If the umpire contacts any other fielder playing a batted ball, the ball is live and interference is not ruled. It is only contact between the umpire and catcher that might result in interference. If there is a play in which the defense obtains an out despite the contact, the play stands. But if the catcher is prevented from making a play or does not obtain an out, the batter is returned to the batter’s box and the base runners returned. In this case, the catcher fielded the ball but was unable to attempt a play so the base runner returns to first base, the batter returns to the batter’s box with the previous count.
A.R.9.7.1.3: The plate umpire inadvertently interferes with the catcher’s attempt to throw out a base runner stealing second base. The base runner is not put out so the umpire immediately declares the ball dead and returns the base runner to first base but what happens to the pitch? Is it no pitch?

**RULING:** The non-contacted pitch is either a ball or strike because the interference had no bearing on its location and whether or not the batter swung.

**A.R.9.7.1.3 Note:** The batter hits a pitch to the home run fence but as she rounds first base, she collides with the base umpire and both fall to the ground. Before the batter-runner can get up to advance, the ball is thrown in from the outfield and the batter-runner who is still on the ground, is tagged out.

**RULING:** If the ball is live when an umpire and runner collide, it remains live and play continues until its normal conclusion which in this case is the tag out. If the pitch had been hit out of the park, the batter-runner would still be responsible for touching all bases following the collision. Similarly, if an umpire and defender collide, play continues until its normal conclusion. (See also Rule 9.4.)

**Blocked ball**

**A.R.9.8:** A shoe falls off a player and is struck by a batted ball which then deflects away from the fielder.

**RULING:** If the shoe belongs to a base runner, it is loose offensive equipment (see Rule 9.8.2). If it belongs to a defensive player, it is considered loose defensive equipment (see Rule 9.8.3).

**A.R.9.8.3:** When a ball becomes lodged in the clothing or attached equipment of a defensive player, the effect is the ball is live until it is judged by the umpire to no longer be playable at which time it is a dead ball. What are the base awards once the ball is declared dead?

**RULING:** The base awards would be to the bases they would have reached had the ball not become lodged.

**A.R.9.10.3:** On a completely enclosed field with gates to the dugout, the plate umpire reminds coaches during the pregame meeting to keep the dugout gates closed. The gates are closed at the beginning of a play with a base runner on second base. The batter hits a ball that rolls all the way to the home-run fence. The base runner attempts to score as the relay throw is off line and headed toward the dugout gate. As the base runner is about to score, a player opens the gate and the ball rolls through it and into the dugout. What is the effect?

**RULING:** If the ball went through the open gate into the offensive team’s dugout:

1) If the offense was acting properly (i.e. the on-deck batter coming to the on-deck circle), penalize the defense for the errant throw by awarding the batter-runner two bases from the time of the throw and the base runner is awarded home.

2) If however, the offense was not acting properly (i.e., opened the gate as the ball started rolling in that direction), declare dead ball and place the batter-runner and base runner at the base last touched which means the run does not score.

If the ball went through the open gate into the defensive team’s dugout:

1) There is no situation when the defense would be acting properly and open the gate so if they were guilty of this unsporting act, declare dead ball and award the base runner home and the batter-runner the base she would have reached had the unsporting act not occurred which must be a minimum of two bases from the time of the throw.

**A.R.9.11:** If a pitched ball is rolling on the ground and the catcher, while trying to retrieve it, accidentally kicks the ball into dugout, is it still a pitch with only a one base award? Does it matter if the pitch is no longer is moving when there’s contact with the catcher?

**RULING:** It is considered a pitch until it becomes a batted ball or is thrown by the catcher. The award to base runners would be one base and it does not matter if the ball, at the time of the contact with the catcher was moving or stationary.

**Pitching**

**Taking the Signal**

**A.R.10.2^1:** The pitcher puts her front foot on the pitcher’s plate and looks to the catcher who by her hand/arm movements apparently gives the pitcher the signal. The pitcher then steps on the pitcher’s plate with her rear foot assuming a legal position, brings her hands together and begins the pitch. Is this a legal pitch?

**RULING:** Illegal pitch. The pitcher is not restricted to taking only one signal. She can stand as described and receive a pitching signal. But she must then take another signal or simulate taking a signal in the position described in 10.2...both feet on the pitcher’s plate, hands separated, the ball in either (but not both hands). This required position alerts the batter and umpire that she is about to bring her hands together, separate them and deliver the pitch.

**A.R.10.2^2:** The pitcher steps on the pitcher’s plate with both feet, her hands apart, and gets the sign from the catcher. She then brings her hands together, pauses, looks to the catcher and receives additional signs from her. Is this additional apparent sign illegal?

**RULING:** The first part satisfies the requirements in 10.2 for taking the signal. She must pause with her hands together for not more than five seconds but the rule does not specify what else she can do during that time so yes, she can receive additional signals during those five seconds.
A.R.10.2*: The pitcher likes to work very quickly and in order to give the batter time to be set, the umpire often needs to suspend play by putting a hand up. Once the batter is set and the umpire’s arm lowers, the pitcher immediately brings her hands together and begins her pitch. The question is while the umpire uses the “do not pitch” signal, can the pitcher take her signal and then as the arm lowers, bring her hands together and continue with her pitch OR must she wait to take her signal until after the arm lowers?

RULING: The pitcher must take or simulate taking her signal once the umpire signals play ball or lowers his/her arm indicating readiness for play.

Footwork
A.R.10.4.1: The pitcher begins her pitch by lifting her pivot foot straight up into the air (without reducing the distance to home plate) and bringing it right back down onto its original spot on the pitcher’s plate. She then takes a step forward toward home plate.

RULING: This footwork is illegal. The pitcher may not lose contact between the pivot foot and pitcher’s plate without it being the one allowable step/stride.

SOFTBALL WHYS- Dealing with the pitcher’s push from the pitcher’s plate...can you explain what is and is not legal and why the rule was changed for the 2012 season?

RULE FOUNDATION- A.R.10.4.2.

COMMENT- On a national level, there was no change in the pitching rule other than making it a rule violation for pitching at the plate umpire. In all other aspects of mechanics, interpretations, rule wording and application, the rule remained the same as the previous two years.

That said though, specific players, coaches and umpires might have been making changes because they were previously not in sync with the correct mechanics, wording of the rule or application and were being asked to change to the national standard. As individuals were making these necessary changes in order to pitch legally or enforce the rules correctly, perhaps that was misconstrued as a mandated change initiated by the rules committee.

IT REMAINS LEGAL FOOTWORK IF THE PIVOT FOOT IS IN CONTACT WITH THE PITCHER’S PLATE PRIOR TO AND ON THE ONLY DRIVE AND THEN REMAINS IN CONTACT WITH THE GROUND (OR WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN THE GROUND HAD A HOLE NOT BEEN CREATED) THROUGHOUT THE PITCHING MOTION AS THE FRONT FOOT LANDS INSIDE THE PITCHER’S LANE.

IT REMAINS ILLEGAL IF A SECOND DRIVE POINT IS ESTABLISHED OR IF THE PIVOT FOOT BECOMES AIRBORNE IN A REPLANT, LEAP OR CROW HOP.

Dropped
A.R.10.7: The pitcher, while taking her sign from the catcher, drops the ball before bringing her hands together. The plate umpire awards a ball to the batter but shouldn't this have been a "live" ball with no penalty? The pitcher just dropped the ball before starting her motion.

RULING: Yes, it is a live ball with no award to the batter but base runners may advance with liability to be put out since the pitcher no longer has possession of the ball in the circle.

Illegal Pitch
A.R.10.8*: With a base runner on first base, an illegal pitch is thrown which the batter hits for a double to the outfield. The base runner rounds third base and heads home but she is thrown out at home plate. Since the batter-runner reaches second base safely and the base runner advances two bases before being thrown out, the effect for the illegal pitch is cancelled. Does this not go against the basic tenet of penalizing the offender by replacing the base award of an illegal pitch with the result of the play (an out)?

RULING: The base runner and batter-runner both advanced a base from where they were at the time of the illegal pitch so that equals the award for an illegal pitch and is why the result of the play stands. The fact that the base runner then unsuccessfully attempted two additional bases is what resulted in the out but could have just as easily resulted in a run.

A.R.10.8*: With two outs and no one on base, the pitcher throws an illegal pitch. The batter hits to the outfield and successfully gains second base. However, the batter-runner misses first base and the defense makes a live ball appeal to get the third out. Does the offense have an option to take the result of the play or return the batter to the batter’s box from the illegal pitch because the batter-runner never successfully attained first base or is the option negated because the batter-runner successfully attained second base (and the option is cancelled once she reaches first base)?

RULING: The runner is considered to have possession of the base once she passes it so the option for an illegal pitch is no longer given and the runner is declared out when the defense properly appeals she has missed first base.

No Pitch
A.R.10.10.5: Base runners on first and second bases, no outs. The batter is a slapper who runs out of the front of the batter’s box and gets hit by a pitch which is called illegal 1) she swings and misses and 2) she does not swing.

RULING: In 1) the result of the play is a dead ball strike so because the base runners did not advance and the batter is not on base, the offensive coach can choose those results or choose the standard effect for illegal pitch (ball on the batter and both base runners advance). In 2) the result of being hit by a pitch before it gets to the plate is “no pitch” so because the base runners did not advance and the batter is not on base, the offensive coach can choose those results or choose the standard effect for illegal pitch.
Substance on Ball

**A.R.10.13:** Which substances may be applied to the ball or the pitcher’s hand and which of those require the pitcher to wipe the substance off before gripping the ball? Also, in cold weather, may a pitcher blow her own breath onto her hand without then wiping her hand prior to gripping the ball?

**RULING:** In the pregame process, dirt can be used or substances like Turface or Gorilla Gold that remove the manufacturers' gloss and slickness on the ball. But once the umpire puts a ball in play, applying any substance to the ball is not legal unless by or done at the direction of the umpire.

Regarding the pitcher’s hand, substances that do not transfer to the ball (i.e. gorilla gold, mighty grip, cold air…) do not have to be wiped off. However all substances that do transfer to the ball, including dirt and saliva, must be wiped off before the pitcher grips the ball.

**A.R.10.13.2^1:** Regarding rock rosin and liquid products designed to improve the pitcher’s grip on the ball, how is an umpire to detect these products which are kept in the dugout and applied to the player’s hands to make them “tacky” out of view of the umpire?

**RULING:** If the pitcher puts any substance on her hand in the dugout, it will likely not be detected by either the umpires or opponents unless the substance transfers to the ball. In that case, when the ball becomes tacky, an illegal pitch is called for the first offense and the pitcher is ejected for any subsequent offense. It does not matter who on the defense defaces the ball, so regardless of the source, it is the pitcher who is ejected.

**A.R.10.13.2^2:** The batter just received ball four, and is on her way to first base. The catcher returns the ball to the pitcher. Prior to the batter-runner touching first base, the pitcher is in the circle and goes to her mouth wetting her fingers and without wiping off, the pitcher applies the saliva to the ball. Is illegal pitch enforced even though it is not yet a pitch?

**RULING:** An illegal pitch can be called for any pitch thrown by the pitcher that is in violation of the pitching rules but also as an effect for a rules violation. It is the latter case that applies to this situation of applying a foreign substance to the ball. By rule, “For the first offense, an illegal pitch shall be called as soon as the foreign substance touches the ball.” Therefore, the umpire witnessing the action calls “illegal pitch” and makes the award. After the batter-runner touches first base, she is awarded second base. The next batter starts her at-bat with a 1-ball and 0-strike count. The pitcher need not be in the pitching position nor actually throw a doctored pitch.

Returned Ball

**A.R.10.16^1:** Runners on second and third bases, no outs, tie ball game bottom of the seventh inning. Defensive coach uses a conference. The first pitch to the next batter is called a ball, the catcher throws the ball directly to first base, instead of back to the pitcher. An additional ball is awarded to the batter for violating Rule 10.16, and play is resumed with a 2-0 count. The batter receives two more balls and it is apparent the intent was to walk the batter in as few pitches as possible. In hindsight, is there anything that should have been done differently?

**RULING:** Even with the violation immediately following the defensive conference, it is not realistic to anticipate the catcher would make this throw in order to avoid having to throw one of the four pitches needed for the walk. But in addition to the ball on the batter, the catcher would be warned and should she do it again, she would be ejected so it likely would not happen more than once a game. If the umpire has reason to believe the act was intentional in order to walk the batter, the ball would not be assessed but the catcher would still be warned.

**A.R.10.16^2:** With no runners on base, the batter nicks the pitch resulting in a foul ball. The catcher picks up the ball and throws it to the third baseman who is standing in the circle with the pitcher. Since the catcher did not return the ball directly to the pitcher, is a ball assessed?

**RULING:** There is no penalty for a catcher who does not return the ball directly to the pitcher if the ball was contacted by the batter.

Time Between Pitches

**A.R.10.18^4:** At the start of the game, the home team finishes its warm-up and is huddling in the circle, the pitcher has the ball and the batter is at the batter’s box ready. Should the umpire call "Play Ball" and start the 10 second count or should he wait until the huddle breaks up?

**RULING:** The plate umpire should manage the flow of the game by allowing the huddle to break up but if this is taking an excessive amount of time, walking toward the circle and encouraging the players to assume their positions is appropriate as is enlisting the help of the head coach in getting the defense ready to play in a timely manner. If your reminders continue without a change in player behavior, it might be necessary to say “play ball” and begin the count but that will likely be the exception.

**A.R.10.18^5:** Can the batter assume her batting stance, step out of the batter’s box without being granted time, step back into the box and legally hit the pitch?

**RULING:** Yes, because play was not suspended by the plate umpire, if the batter realizes her mistake and gets back in the box, she may legally continue her turn at bat.
Warm-up Pitches

A.R.10.19: With a base runner on third base, the defensive coach reports a defensive change of the pitcher and second baseman. The incoming pitcher takes her five allowable warm-up pitches and then throws four additional warm-up pitches, the penalty for which the umpire awards four balls to the next batter. As soon as the batter reaches first base on the award, the defensive coach switches the players back. The coach was simply walking the batter with no risk of the base runner from third base advancing. Is this strategy legal?

RULING: Unfortunately, it is legal however this is largely preventable by the umpires interceding immediately. Ideally, as soon as the fifth warm-up pitch is thrown, the plate umpire will prevent another warm-up pitch from being thrown by bringing the batter to the batter’s box. If the plate umpire is still engaged in the administration of the substitution, the base umpire can stop the additional warm-up pitches which in the worst case, would be one additional warm-up pitch before someone intercedes. Teams attempting this tactic will likely throw the warm-up pitches quickly and the crew must be alert to the possibility that they are attempting to intentionally walk a batter using this strategy. A variation of this situation occurs when a pitcher begins an inning, is replaced by a relief pitcher and then returns to pitch all in the same inning. The returning pitcher may quickly attempt four warm-up pitches and since she is not entitled to them, the same result of the next being awarded first base occurs. In the end though, by rule, if any pitcher throws warm-up pitches that she is not entitled to, the next batter(s) would receive the awarded ball(s).

A.R.10.19.2: The pitching rules do not state where warm-up pitches originate, only that they conclude at the plate. Is it acceptable for a pitcher during her warm-ups to throw from halfway between the circle and second base or from in front of the circle?

RULING: Although 10.19.2 does not specifically address where she can begin her pitch, 6.5.6.1 does require that her warm-up pitch be from the pitcher’s circle. A pitcher is considered to be in the pitcher’s circle when both her feet are within the circle or on the lines. So in the end, to be in compliance with the rules, the pitcher must start with both feet in/on the pitcher’s circle and deliver her warm-up pitches to the plate. Thus neither of these situations in the question is legal.

A.R.10.19.3: The starting pitcher is struggling with her accuracy so the head coach reports a substitution and brings in a player from the bullpen. As the substitute comes onto the field, the pitcher “dart throws” the ball to her and heads to the dugout. The incoming pitcher is hit right between the eyes and is injured to the point that she cannot enter the game. The original pitcher is re-entered. The issue is Rule 10.19.3 does not allow the pitcher who re-enters in the same inning to throw any warm-up pitches. Rule 10.19.5 says the relief pitcher who comes in for an injured pitcher must be allowed adequate time to warm-up. Is she or is she not entitled to warm-up pitches in the inning?

RULING: The answer depends on the situation. If the injured pitcher is capable of leaving the field immediately, the re-entering pitcher should not be granted additional warm-up pitches since she has just come out of the game and she was not removed due to injury. If however, there is significant delay in attending to the injured pitcher, then the re-entering pitcher should be granted warm-up time. During the delay, she can be granted time to warm-up, providing the medical personnel are at a safe location or she throws in a direction other than home plate that is safe for the medical staff and the injured pitcher. The key is using good judgment considering the safe return of the re-entering pitcher at the same time not providing her with an advantage she is not normally entitled to.

A.R.10.19.5: A pitcher is struggling with her accuracy and is eventually removed from the pitching position due to injury. Her replacement has not warmed up at all and is granted more than five warm-up pitches to get ready. Can the original pitcher come back to pitch in this game? Wouldn’t coaches take advantage of this loophole in the warm-up rule when their pitcher is struggling?

RULING: NCAA rules allow a substitute pitcher adequate warm-up time in the event of an injury to the pitcher and do not prevent the pitcher who is removed due to injury from returning to pitch. If the replaced pitcher is ready to return, she can do so. Even in the same inning... with no limitations other than not receiving warm-up pitches in the inning in which she was replaced. You are absolutely correct that this could be used inappropriately however in the interest of student-athlete welfare and safety, the incoming pitcher should be allowed adequate warm-up opportunity and if a team is guilty of asking a student-athlete to fake an injury in order to get extra warm-up pitches, word will likely be well circulated among the coaching and umpiring communities which will put a stop to this unsporting behavior.

A.R.10.19.6: The pitcher shall be given adequate time to warm-up after any substantial delay caused by inclement weather, injury or delayed play by the umpire. So can she continue to throw warm-up pitches while the umpire is administering substitutions?

RULING: The key here is additional warm-up pitches are allowed in the event of “substantial delay”. The purpose of the rule is to minimize the risk of injury to the pitcher who is unable to stay loose due to circumstances beyond her control. In general, recording lineup changes would not cause substantial delays and result in extra pitches. However in extremely cold conditions or with complicated substitutions, the umpire may grant the additional warm-ups. In any case, the pitcher should ask the umpire for permission to throw additional warm-up pitches to be sure she will not be penalized or she may throw underhand to a teammate (other than to home plate) to stay loose while the substitutions are being completed without permission of the plate umpire.
Batting

A.R. 11 Intro: Base runner on second base with two outs. Third strike swinging but as the catcher catches the pitch which is high and inside, it brings her up and behind batter. The batter’s swing is balanced and normal (although long) which causes contact with the catcher’s mitt (not the ball) and dislodges the ball causing it to roll away from the catcher. Is it obstruction or dropped third strike or batter interference?

RULING: The batter is entitled to one unobstructed swing but only until the catcher contacts the pitch so once the pitch is touched by the catcher, the batter’s opportunity to hit the ball ended. The contact therefore is not the fault of the catcher, thus eliminating obstruction. It is not a dropped third strike as the catcher was prevented from holding onto the pitch. It is not batter’s interference as the situation says her swing was normal, indicating she did nothing to hinder the catcher. It is however a swinging strike and since it was her third, the batter is out. (See also Rule 11.3.3.2.)

Batter’s Position

A.R.11.2.1: The batter has a 2-1 count and on a called strike, she mistakenly thinks she has struck out so she begins to retreat to the dugout. The umpire signals the 2-2 count but the batter continues to leave the plate area. Since the time between pitch clock is running, should the umpire wait until the 10 seconds allowed for her to return to the batter’s box has elapsed (in which case she is out on strike three) or should the umpire suspend play to stop the 10 second countdown and call the batter back to the batter’s box?

RULING: By tradition, the batter should be returned to the batter’s box to complete her turn at bat. It is a bit ironic because in all other situations, the players are expected to know the playing situation but both baseball and softball codes allow for the batter to be called back to the batter’s box with no effect. Additionally, time between pitches was intended to assist with pace of the game, not as a desired effect for a batter who mistakenly thinks she has struck out.

A.R.11.2.6: The batter attempts to avoid being hit by an inside pitch. In doing so, she leans forward, stepping on the plate to catch her balance. The bat is still on her shoulder but the barrel, which is behind her head, contacts the pitch that then rolls into fair territory.

RULING: The ball is dead and the batter is out for contacting the pitch while in contact with home plate. If there are base runners, they must return to the bases occupied at the time of the pitch. The batter need not show intent to contact the pitch when contact is made.

Batted Ball

A.R.11.4, 11.5: With one out and the bases loaded, the batter hits an infield fly. No fielder makes an attempt to catch the ball which eventually falls to the ground in the path of the batter-runner who is running to first base. 1) The ball hits the base runner’s foot as she is running in the runner’s lane; 2) the ball deflects off the base runner’s foot as she is running in fair territory and goes directly to the catcher who picks up the ball and throws out the runner at third base who is standing off the base in awe. Is this a double play due to the infield fly and the tag out?

RULING: On the declared infield fly, the batter is out if the ball is fair. In 1) the ball becomes a foul ball at the moment it contacts the batter-runner in foul territory. The batter returns to the batter’s box with an additional strike and with the bases loaded because infield fly does not apply to foul fly balls. In 2) the batter is out on the declared infiel d fly and the ball becomes dead at the moment it deflects off the batter-runner in fair territory. No subsequent play can occur so there is no out at third base and the runners are returned to the bases held at the time of the pitch with two outs. (See also Rule 11.17.)

Foul Tip/Foul Ball

A.R.11.6: On a potential foul tip with two strikes on the batter...(1) Ball goes directly off the bat, nicks off the catcher's glove, rebounds into the air, and the catcher dives to catch it in her glove; (2) Ball goes directly off the bat, nicks off the catcher's glove, hits her in the chest, rebounds off of her and she catches it in her glove; (3) Ball goes directly off the bat, hits the catcher in the chest, rebounds off of her and she catches it in her glove.

RULING: For both 1) and 2) the ruling would be foul tip/strike three. 3) Foul ball because the first contact was not with the catcher’s hand or glove.

A.R.11.6a2: With two strikes and no one on base, the pitcher pitches the ball which drops off the table and skips off the dirt just as the batter is swinging. The batter gets a piece of it off the bounce fouling it directly back thus producing a foul tip into the catcher’s glove. Did the fact that she was able to foul tip it eliminate the dropped third strike or is any pitch that hits the dirt considered a dropped third strike?

RULING: The batter may swing at, bunt or hit a ball even though it has bounced but then must take the result of the play as opposed to the result of the dropped third strike. So if she swings at a pitch on a high bounce and hits it out of the park, she is credited with a home run...if she fouls a low bounce back to the catcher, the result is a strike and, in this particular case, since it was her third strike, she is out. You cannot have a dropped third strike on a batted ball. (See also Rule 11.13.)

A.R.11.8: The batter swings at a pitch which then goes directly from her bat to the toe of her front foot which is entirely out of the box 1) in the air or 2) in contact with the ground. In both cases, her back foot is completely within the lines of the batter’s box.

RULING: 1) Because the batter’s only contact with the ground is her back foot which is within the batter’s box, it is a foul ball, strike. (See also Rule 11.5.1.) 2) With both batter’s feet in contact with the ground and one being outside the batter’s box, the batter is considered out of the box. The ball is dead, the batter is out regardless of if the ball becomes fair or foul. (See also Rule 11.16.1.)
Batting Out of Order

A.R.11.10.3^1: The leadoff batter was the base runner on second base with no one out. Batter three (improper batter) singles to the outfield and is safe at second base on the throw home. The base runner who started on second base advances to home but misses third base. At the conclusion of the play, the first base coach appeals to the plate umpire regarding batting out of order at the same time the third base coach appeals to the base umpire regarding the missed base. Which takes precedence?

RULING: The umpire crew will resolve the appeals in the order in which they occurred. If an order cannot be determined (i.e. too close to call), the plate umpire will ask the head coach to identify the appeal to be ruled on first. In either case, the plate umpire must inform the umpire at the base of the appeal to be ruled on first. If the defense first appeals the base runner from second base missed third base, she is out (first out) and then appeals the improper batter on the next pitch, batter two is declared out for failing to bat (second out) and the advance by batter three is nullified. Batter three is the batter who follows the declared out so she now up to bat with 2 outs and no base runners. 

A.R.11.10.3^2: The leadoff batter in the inning strikes out, the next batter is skipped in the batting order but the player after her grounds into the second out of the inning. Before a pitch to the next batter, the defensive coach informs the umpire that a batter was skipped and in the effect of rule 11.10.3, “the player who should have batted is out”. Therefore, the inning is over with three outs, correct?

RULING: Incorrect, the batter who should have batted is out but the result of the play (the ground out) would be nullified. A coach who sees this mistake needs to decide who he/she wants to bat. If batting out of order is brought to the umpire’s attention, the skipped batter is the out and the correct batter entering the batter’s box is the one who just grounded out. If the batter who grounded out is the preferred out, the next batter is the one who follows her in the batting order and the mistake in the batting order is not brought to the umpire’s attention. In any case, there will be a batter with two outs.

A.R.11.10.3^3: Bases loaded with one out and the number three hitter, who is having a bad day at the plate, due up. The coach sends the clean-up hitter to bat out-of-order. If the defense does not catch the batting out of order, the offense gains an advantage by batting the number four hitter, rather than the struggling hitter, with the bases loaded. If the defense catches the batting out of order violation, the hitter who should have batted is called out (the struggling number three hitter) and the number four hitter gets to bat again. Does the umpire allow the clean-up hitter to bat again?

RULING: While this might seem like an unfair advantage, giving up an out by not having the number three hitter bat makes little sense. But if a coach uses this strategy, the rule book effect must be enforced so indeed the clean-up hitter would bat again but with two outs and the bases loaded.

Checked Swing

A.R.11.12.5: With two outs, a base runner on first base, and a 0-2 count on the ninth batter in the batting order, the base runner attempts to steal second base on the next pitch. The batter attempts to check her swing and the base runner is tagged out before reaching second base. The defensive coach immediately tells the umpire to ask the base umpire for a ruling on the checked swing but the catcher tells the plate umpire not to request help.

RULING: Rule 11.12.5 requires the umpire to request help only when asked by the catcher but may (not must) defer to the base umpire when requested to do so by the coach. The decision on whether or not the batter swing and is the third out of the inning (meaning the next inning starts with the leadoff batter in the lineup in the batter's box) or the base runner was the third out of the inning (meaning the ninth batter begins the next inning in the batter's box) might be significant and should not be ruled on by the plate umpire until it is clear whether or not the defensive team does want the help of the base umpire. Therefore the catcher and coach should be allowed to quickly confer before confirming whether or not they are questioning the checked swing. In either case, the plate umpire must inform the scorer which player was the final out of the inning.

Dropped Third Strike

A.R.11.13^1: With a base runner on first base and one out, the batter strikes out swinging but the catcher drops the pitch. The plate umpire calls the batter out. Seeing the dropped pitch, the batter runs to first base while the base runner from first base runs to second base. 1) The catcher looks to second base, double pumps and then throws to first base just after the retired batter steps on the base. At the end of the play, the defensive coach argues for batter interference on the already retired batter (Rule 11.21.3) so the base runner, now on second base, should be declared out. 2) The same situation applies except that the catcher deliberately throws the ball at the retired batter's back as she runs in the running lane to first base.

RULING: In both cases, the batter is out on strike three and the ball is live allowing the base runner to advance at her own risk. The defense is responsible for knowing the rule and should concentrate on the base runner who is advancing rather than the batter who was already declared out. In 1) there is no relief because the catcher chose to throw to the wrong base; and in 2) the catcher who makes this throw risks that the live ball will ricochet somewhere allowing the base runner to advance further as well as risking being ejected for unsporting behavior if the umpire believes the catcher deliberately threw at an opponent.
**A.R.11.13**^2: With less than two out and first base occupied, the batter leaves the batter’s box and heads toward first base after a third strike not held by the catcher. The base runner feigns stealing second base but returns to first base which draws a pick-off throw by the catcher. The throw ricochets off the retired batter allowing the base runner to advance to second base. Per ASA rules, the ball is dead and the runner returns to first. What is the NCAA ruling?

RULING: Rule 11.13 covers the general rule for dropped third strike but does not apply here since there are less than two outs and first base is occupied. Therefore the batter is not entitled to run and since she is already out on strikes when she interferes with a defensive player’s opportunity to make a play, apply the penalty in Rule 12.8.7. That is, the ball is dead and the base runner closest to home at the time of the interference (in this case the base runner on first base) shall be declared out.

**Second Contact**

**A.R.11.14.1:** A slapper hits the pitch and drops her bat to run to first base. As the ball is bouncing up and the bat is falling down (out of batters hands), they collide. The ball rolls foul before it is touched by the catcher. What is the call?

RULING: Since the ball is foul, it doesn’t matter whether the ball impacted the bat or the bat impacted the ball. If the ball had been fair, the umpire would judge whether the bat or the ball was more responsible for the contact and then enforce the appropriate effect in 11.14.1. If in doubt, penalize the batter as she originally controlled the bat before dropping it.

**Hit Batter**

**SOFTBALL WHYS:** Deleting the requirement that a batter must make an attempt to avoid the pitch that is entirely in the batter’s box seems to encourage the batter to get hit and increases the chance of injury.

**RULE FOUNDATION:** Rule 11.15

**COMMENT:** The intent of the rule change is to be consistent with the basic tenet of penalizing the violator. The pitch never belongs entirely in the batter’s box and yet, under the old rule, the batter was required to help the pitcher avoid the penalty by avoiding being hit by the misplaced pitch. Under the new effect, if a pitcher throws the ball into the batter’s space, the batter no longer has to avoid contact to receive the base award. It is not the NCAA Softball Rules Committee’s expectation that more batters will be hit by pitches but instead pitcher’s will make the adjustments to throw fewer pitches into the batter’s box.

**A.R.11.15**^1: The batter is hit by a pitch that was also ball four. Is the batter awarded first base on a walk or hit by pitch?

RULING: In most cases, it is scored as being hit by a pitch. The rationale is that the ball should be dead and other base runners not permitted to advance as the catcher tracks down the deflected pitch. Had it been scored a walk, the ball would be live.

That said though, if the batter makes no attempt to avoid being hit by the pitch (which was not entirely in the batter’s box) or initiates the contact with the pitch and the umpire would not have awarded the batter first base based on the contact, the batter is awarded first base on ball four and it is scored as a base on balls. There are umpire mechanics specified for each of these awards to assist the scorekeeper in the proper call. (See also Rules 14.2.4 and 14.2.16.)

**A.R.11.15**^2: If a pitch that is over the plate but not in the strike zone, hits the batter, is the batter awarded first base?

RULING: The result depends upon the situation. If the batter-ball contact is out of the strike zone but the batter swings, it is a dead ball strike. If the batter-ball contact is over the plate but not a strike, it is a dead ball and the batter is either awarded first base or a ball; in the latter case because the batter made no attempt to avoid being hit. If the batter-ball contact is in front of home plate, it is no pitch.

**Infield Fly**

**A.R.11.17**^1: Is the infield fly rule in effect even if no umpire calls it?

RULING: If a ball is hit which would define the situation of an infield fly but is not declared, it is not an infield fly in NCAA play.

**A.R.11.17**^2: With no outs and the bases loaded, the batter hits a declared infield fly however the third baseman loses sight of the ball in the sun. The ball lands in foul territory and without being touched, rolls into fair territory right in front of home plate. The third baseman picks up the ball and throws to first base to tag out the base runner who started there but was off the base.

RULING: Double play; the batter is out on the fair infield fly and the base runner from first base is out on the tag.

**A.R.11.17**^3: With one out and the bases loaded, the batter hits an infield fly straight up in the air which is not caught. The ball lands just behind home plate and rolls forward into fair territory without being touched. The catcher, seeing the base runner from third attempt to score as the ball was rolling on the ground, grabs the ball in front of home plate and tags the base runner before she touches home. Is this a double play due to the infield fly and the tag out?

RULING: Yes, the batter is out on the infield fly and the base runner on third base who attempted to advance was legally tagged out.

**A.R.11.17 Notes:** In an infield fly situation: 1) if an outfielder is positioned just beyond the infield dirt at the time of the pitch and calls off the infielder who could easily catch a pop fly ball, or 2) if an infielder has time to run out to the outfield and is in position to easily catch a pop fly ball, does that change it from an infield fly to just a routine fly ball and a routine fly ball to an infield fly respectively?

RULING: In both cases, it remains an infield fly as long as an infielder could catch the ball with ordinary effort regardless of who actually catches the fly ball.
Interference

SOFTBALL WHYS- In other softball and baseball codes, interference is an act of an offensive player who interferes with, hinders, confuses, distracts or impedes a fielder attempting to execute a play. However in NCAA softball, interference is only defined as an act that denies a defensive player a reasonable opportunity to make a play anywhere on the playing field. Why does NCAA softball have such a narrow definition and doesn’t that encourage unsporting play?

RULE FOUNDATION- Rule 11.19
COMMENT- It is the feeling of the NCAA Softball Rules committee that because the defense is allowed to confuse the offense (from pitching change-ups to faking throws to hidden ball tricks), the offense should not be precluded from confusing the defense. So a college softball batter may legally attempt to confuse a defender by showing bunt but actually swinging at a pitch and a base runner may legally feint tagging and advancing on a caught fly ball simply to confuse the fielder into making an ill-advised throw to a base she is not advancing to. A classic collegiate deception play by base runners includes a batter-runner overrunning first base and then stepping over but not on the base in order to advance to second base even though the ball is in the pitcher’s possession in the circle. A new twist on a first and third running play this season includes the trailing base runner advancing toward but not near second base in an attempt to distract the defense from preventing the base runner on third base from scoring. So the NCAA rules do allow a variety of actions by the offense that could be considered interference in other codes.

A.R.11.21.2^1: There’s a base runner on second base and a right handed batter when the pitch is thrown inside, lands in the dirt and is blocked by the catcher in the batter's box where the batter is standing. The batter steps out of the batter’s box (towards the dugout) because the pitch and the catcher are at her feet. The catcher picks up the ball and attempts to throw out the base runner advancing to third base. On her throw, the catcher contacts the batter (who is clearly out of the box) which causes the throw to be too late to throw out the base runner. Is this interference?

RULING: Latitude may be given here to the batter who steps out of the box to avoid the pitch which is coming at her feet and then is out of the box at the time the catcher attempts to make a play. In this case, the batter likely prevented a wild pitch by giving way to the catcher to smother the ball and now finds herself in jeopardy of violating Rule 11.21.2. If, in the opinion of the umpire, the displaced batter did not hinder the catcher and in fact may have assisted her, albeit unintentionally, then interference should not be ruled.

A.R.11.21.2^2: A batter draws her bat backward just prior to a pitch and contacts the catcher. Is this interference?

RULING: Often the umpire’s time management skills of holding the pitcher up until the batter has assumed her set position will prevent this situation. But assuming it did not… this is a judgment call with the overriding principle of penalizing the offender. If the pitcher has not begun her motion, as soon as contact is made with the catcher, the umpire should call “no pitch” and step out of the set position. Everyone then resets without penalty. If drawing the bat backward is an attempt to hinder the catcher, (for example, in showing bunt and then deliberately drawing the bat back to protect a base stealer) assess the penalty for interference (Rule 11.21.2). If the contact impedes the batter’s ability to contact the ball, enforce the effect for catcher obstruction (Rule 9.5.1).

A.R.11.21.2^3: The base runner on first base steals on the pitch of a 3-1 count and two outs. The pitch is a close outside pitch which causes the catcher to come up throwing to second base before and during the time the umpire is calling the pitch a ball. The batter, now batter-runner, is crossing in front of the plate and freezes as the catcher is throwing to second base. The catcher makes contact with the batter-runner and her throw sails into center field.

RULING: For there to be interference on the batter-runner on this play, the interference has to be intentional. Not sure if that is the case when “she freezes” in front of home plate, so that would be the umpire’s judgment. If it is ruled intentional, than enforce 11.21.2 or 12.19.1.5, depending on the location of the interference. If it is not intentional, it is incidental contact that results in the ball remaining live. (See also Rule 12.19.)

A.R.11.21.2^4: With a base runner on second base, the left-handed batter takes a strike. The catcher, attempting to pick off the base runner, throws but the ball strikes the motionless bat of the batter who is standing still in the batter's box and the ball deflects out of play into the dugout.

RULING: The batter has not hindered the catcher although the ball has deflected out of play. The base runner scores on the play (on the two base award) and the batter remains at bat with a strike one count.

A.R.11.21.2^5: The base runner on first base is stealing second base on a 3-1 count. On the pitch, the right handed batter believes it to be a ball and starts across home plate on a walk however the pitch is called a strike. The catcher starts to throw to catch the base runner stealing but stops as the batter-runner crosses in front of her. The catcher does not throw but can interference be called or is this similar to a no call when a catcher does not throw to first base on a bunted ball when the batter-runner is outside the runner’s lane and potentially in the way.

RULING: These are two different plays with different results. In the first, the batter can be called out for interference since she is not entitled to be out of the batter’s box and interfere with the catcher. In the second case, if there is no throw, you cannot determine if the batter-runner interfered with the catch at first base so it cannot be assumed interference would have occurred.
A.R.11.21.2^6: Following a called strike, the batter, while still in the batter’s box, bends down to tie her shoe. As she does, the catcher attempts to return the ball to the pitcher but the ball hits the batter’s helmet and caroms into foul territory allowing the base runner on first base to successfully advance. Is this batter’s interference?
RULING: Since no play was being made, it is considered accidental interference so the batter is not penalized by enforcing batter interference and neither is the defense as the base runner must return to first base. The strike remains the result of the play.

A.R.11.21.2^7: There’s a base runner on third base with one out. The batter attempts contact, but misses the pitch, on a suicide squeeze play. The catcher drops the pitch and it rolls forward in front of home plate but within reach. The base runner stops her advance, retreats and is about to re-touch third base as the base makes contact with the catcher. Is the penalty for the batter interfering 11.21.2 or 11.21.2 exception 1?
RULING: The ruling will depend on the context of the contact. Since the base runner was about to re-occupy third base, she was no longer advancing so exception 1 does not apply. The umpire could rule interference or not make any call since no play was being made if the contact was judged to be inadvertent.

A.R.11.21.3^1: With a base runner on third base, the batter is declared out on strikes but runs toward first base confusing the catcher who responds by throwing to the first baseman. The first baseman does not see the throw coming so the ball sails into right field allowing the base runner from third base to score. Is it the catcher’s responsibility to know the batter is out or is this interference because the batter duped the catcher into throwing?
RULING: It is the catcher’s responsibility to know when the batter is out and when she might need to make a throw because of a dropped third strike. Unnecessarily running to first base would not be interference by the batter unless she did something to interfere with play (for example, providing a screen so the first baseman could not return a throw home to prevent the base runner on third base from scoring).

A.R.11.21.3^2: Base runner on first base with one out. The batter misses strike three, as does the catcher, but she runs to first base anyway. The catcher double pumps as she considers throwing to second base to put out the advancing base runner but instead throws to first base. At the end of the play, the defensive coach wants the base runner declared out as a result of 11.21.3.
RULING: Although the retired batter may have confused the catcher, it is the catcher’s responsibility to know the ball was live and the base runner was able to advance at her own risk. In this case, she did not interfere with the catcher so the batter remains out on the strikeout and the base runner remains at second base.

A.R.11.21.3^3: Bases are loaded and the count is 2-2 on the batter. The next pitch is ball three; however the batter drops her bat and runs to first base. All other base runners advance without anyone attempting to play on them, and a run scores. The umpires realizing that it is only ball three brings the batter back to the batter’s box and returns the runners back to their original bases. Is this the correct ruling?
RULING: The umpire was incorrect in recalling the batter to the box and continuing her turn at bat with a full count HOWEVER the base runners who advanced should not have been returned to their original bases. They advanced legally during a live ball and should receive credit for doing so...including the run scored. Returning the base runners to their previous bases would be protestable.
NOTE: This play is different than if the umpire mistakenly awards the batter first base, thinking the last pitch was ball four, and the forced base runner advances or is put out at second base. In this case, the umpire put the players in jeopardy (either the defense not knowing they could put out the base runner or the base runner not avoiding being tagged out respectively) so both the batter and base runner are returned to their respective positions. (See Rule 15.9.3)

Baserunning
A.R.12.2.8: A slap bunt results in the ball quickly being scooped up by the catcher right in front of home plate. The catcher is ready to throw but seeing the batter-runner in her way and out of the runner’s lane, she hesitates, eventually throwing accurately to first base but the throw hits the batter-runner two strides before the base.
RULING: Because the batter-runner interfered with the first baseman’s opportunity to receive the throw, she is out for interference. The note that the batter-runner has not interfered if a fielder does not throw or hesitates before throwing applies when the catcher hesitates and then throws accurately to first base but too late to put out the batter-runner.

SOFTBALL WHYS- Since there were no changes to the definition of the strike zone, why were two new diagrams added to the end of Rule 11?
RULE FOUNDATION- 11.3
COMMENT- The revised diagrams are intended to give an improved image for coaches teaching the strike zone to batters, pitchers and catchers and for umpires who call the game. The first is an aerial view which depicts the fixed width of the zone which always includes all but four and a third inches of the 29 inch space between the inside lines of the batter’s box (home plate plus the river on each side). For those who refer to strikes as just the 17 inch width of the plate or those who consider any outside pitch in the river a strike, this illustration is intended to correct those erroneous boundaries. The second diagram illustrates the variable height of the strike zone for a typical batter in her typical batting stance. It extends from the top of the ball at the top of the knees to the top of the ball at the bottom of the sternum. The Rules Committee hopes the replacement diagrams improve the application of the wording of the strike zone that remains unchanged.
A.R. 12.2.11: If the batter-runner, after stopping and making the first baseman come to her to tag her on the foul line, twists her shoulders or ducks down to avoid or delay a tag without taking a step backward, is she in violation of 12.2.11?
**RULING:** The rules specifically prohibit stepping backward to avoid a tag but as long as the batter runner does not move her feet backward nor run out of the baseline to avoid the tag, she can delay a tag by other means such as ducking. (See also 12.28.5.)

A.R. 12.3.7: With the bases loaded and no one out, a declared infield fly results in the batter being declared out but no infielder attempts to play the batted ball which hits the ground and rolls into short centerfield. The base runner on third base, having taken her lead off and seeing no one play the ball, advances home. The centerfielder picks up the ball and throws it to third base so the defense can appeal the base runner’s failure to tag up on the infield fly. The playing rules require base runners to tag on fly ball outs.
**RULING:** The base runners are required to tag on caught fly balls but need not tag up on an uncaught infield fly. They are in jeopardy of being put out if they attempt to advance.

**Base Runner is Out**

A.R. 12.4.1^1: On a play at first base, the throw bounces and the first baseman securely controls the ball between her arm and her body just before the batter-runner touches the base. Is the batter-runner out?
**RULING:** By rule, the batter-runner is out on a force play if the fielder contacts the base while having and maintaining possession of the ball. However possession is defined by a fielder who, with her hand(s) and/or glove/mitt gains control of a batted, pitched or thrown ball. Therefore the batter-runner in the question is not out.

A.R. 12.4.1^2: Bottom of the seventh, tie game, two outs with runners on first and second bases. The batter hits a slow roller to the first baseman who fields the ball barehanded between her feet, then turns around and dives for first base. She reaches to touch first base with the ball for the force out and as the ball touches the base, it squirts loose. The runner from second base crosses home plate before the first baseman can regain possession of the ball. Does the run score or is the batter-runner out on the force out?
**RULING:** The batter–runner is out on the force play. Unlike for a tag play, there is no time frame that the ball must be held on the base for a force out. If the defensive player has control of the ball when it touches the base, the base later dislodging the ball is irrelevant. Similarly, if the first baseman fields a ground ball, has secure possession, and instead of diving to tag the ball to the base, she takes a few steps parallel to the foul line and touches first base with her foot. At the instant she steps on the bag, the batter-runner's foot lands half on the bag and half on the first baseman's foot causing them both to get tangled up, fall and the ball slips out. The play was nothing intentional; just a wreck immediately after contact with the base on the force out. The batter-runner would be out on the force even though the base runner caused the ball to come loose. (See also Rule 12.26.4.)

A.R. 12.8.2: With one out and a base runner on first base, the batter hits a deep fly ball to centerfield. The base runner, thinking the ball will be caught, returns to first base to tag and consider advancing. Meanwhile the batter-runner rounds first base, thus passing the base runner and is the second out of the inning. The centerfielder loses the ball in the sun and does not make the catch but picks the ball up and throws to second base to put out the forced base runner.
**RULING:** By virtue of the batter-runner's base running mistake, she is the second out of the inning but she also removes the force on the base runner who precedes her. Therefore, unless the base runner is tagged out at second base, she would be safe and there would be two outs.

A.R. 12.8.3: The play begins with runners on first and second bases and the batter hitting a towering fly ball. As both base runners return to tag up, the trailing runner stumbles right before she retouches first base. The center fielder makes the catch, thus retiring the batter-runner who is right next to the trailing runner who has stumbled. The retired batter-runner assists the trailing runner in regaining her footing and safely returning to first base. Is the trailing runner out for being assisted by a batter-runner or is the runner closest to home out because a retired runner assisted an active runner?
**CORRECTED RULING:** Under rule 12.8.3, the assisted base runner would be out for receiving assistance from the retired batter-runner. By rule, only another runner who has not yet crossed home plate may assist a teammate so by virtue of being put out on the caught fly ball, the batter-runner is no longer an active base runner able to help the base runner who stumbled.

A.R. 12.8.8: With a base runner on second base, the third base coach screams, louder than anyone else, “Foul ball, foul ball” on a fair batted ball that dribbles out in front of home plate. The defense stops playing the ball but the base runner arrives safely at third base and the batter eventually runs to first base where she was also safe on the lack of play by the defense.
**RULING:** The coach is guilty of verbal interference which hindered the defender’s opportunity to make a play. The base runner is declared out on the interference (player closest to home plate) and the batter-runner remains at first base.

**Abandonment**

A.R. 12.11^1: If a batter believes she has struck out and leaves the playing area (i.e. enters the dugout), do the same penalties apply as if she was a base runner who abandons her base or a batter-runner who fails to advance on a base award?
**RULING:** No, the batter may be summoned from off the field of play and return to complete her turn at bat without penalty. Ironically, no other offensive player has the same benefit of abandoning her position and returning without being declared out. Rule 12.11 applies to a base runner abandoning a base or effort to run the bases, not to a batter abandoning the batter’s box.
**A.R.12.11**2: With a base runner on third base and one out, the batter receives ball four. The offensive team is located on the first base sideline and as the batter is walking to first base, she stops to have a conversation with the on-deck/upcoming batter. After a five or six second conversation, they “high five” and both players take their respective positions. The defensive coach believes the batter-runner is guilty of abandoning her base running responsibilities and should be called out.  

**RULING:** Because the ball is live and the batter-runner is obligated to advance on the base on balls, there should be common sense application as to the type and length of delay that occurs before the umpire intervenes and directs the batter-runner to immediately advance to the base or be declared out. Batters who do not disrupt play but quickly remove elbow padding or even hand their bat to the on-deck batter before proceeding to first base should not be called out. However if after being directed to advance, the batter-runner refuses to advance, delays advancing, or ignores the direction, she should be declared out for abandoning an effort to run the bases.

**A.R.12.11.4:** With a base runner on first base and one out in the bottom of the seventh inning, the batter hits a ground ball to the second baseman who throws to second base to force out the base runner for the second out. The batter-runner overruns first base (thinking she was out) and takes a wide turn which takes her near the sideline fence. The first base coach successfully calls her back to the base. Is this considered abandoning a base and should the batter-runner be called out for the third and final out of the game?  

**RULING:** The batter-runner would not be guilty of abandoning her base for simply turning into foul territory toward the sideline fence. She would be out however if she had left the field of play or obviously headed into her dugout.

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**Home Run Awards**

**SOFTBALL WHYS-** When a ball is deflected over the home run fence, why is not always a home run?  

**RULE FOUNDATION-** A.R.12.12.3.5 and 12.12.5.2  

**COMMENT-** There are two different situations... the first is a ball that deflects off the home-run fence, back into the field of play where it deflects off a fielder and that impetus sends it over the home-run fence. In this case the batter "deserves" whatever bases she can reach (not a home-run) however with the ball out of play, she is not free to advance. She is awarded second base just as if the ball had bounded over or through the fence. (See Rule 12.12.3.5) The second is a ball with impetus from the bat that sends it over the home-run fence even if it is deflected by a fielder over the home run fence so the batter "deserves" a home-run. (See also Rule 12.12.5.2.)

**A.R.12.12.5:** In a recent NPF game, the ball was hit down the right field line with a base runner on first base and no one out. The right fielder sprinted to the home run fence, reached up to catch the ball, bobbed it, never had control of it and crashed through the breakaway fence in fair territory. The fence was lying on the ground, the fielder was sprawled on top of it and the ball came to rest in the middle of the fence. The fielder picked up the ball and threw it into the field although the batter-runner was safe. Rather than a live ball, shouldn't the correct call have been a ground rule double (Rule 12.12.3) since the ball went beyond the home run fence?  

**RULING:** Because the uncaught fly ball is beyond the home run fence when it first touches the ground, it would be ruled a home run in NCAA play. Even if the ball deflected off the outfielder over the home run fence, it would still be a home run unless the scorer judges she should have caught the ball with ordinary effort, in which case, it would become a four base error. In establishing "over the home run fence" on a collapsed fence, the plane is established from the base of the fence on the ground to the top of the fence when it is correctly positioned., not the top of the fence as it is falling or has fallen away from the field. One of the disadvantages of a temporary, break away fence is that balls do not remain in play that on normal fenced fields, would remain live, exactly as you have detailed here.

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**Collisions**

**A.R.12.13**3: The base runner on second base takes her lead directly toward the shortstop, who is 10 to 12 feet behind (the outfield side) the baseline between second and third bases (as opposed to a leadoff directly toward third base). The ball is hit directly over second base so the base runner is in the fielder’s direct line to the ball. Must the runner go around the shortstop to avoid contact? The base runner in my judgment is trying to draw an obstruction call.  

**RULING:** The shortstop must be given an opportunity to field the ball with consideration for how deep she is playing and the speed and trajectory of the ball. If the base runner interferes with her reasonable opportunity to make a play, that’s interference. If she does not have a reasonable opportunity to play the batted ball but collides with the base runner, 12.13.3 applies.

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**Interference**

**A.R.12.19.1.2.1:** With the bases loaded and one out, the batter hits a high infield fly ball toward first base. The umpire invokes the infield fly rule however no infielder attempts to catch the ball. The ball lands in fair territory where it contacts the batter-runner. The first baseman subsequently fields the rebounded ball and tags the runner who started on first base standing a step off first base. What rule applies?  

**RULING:** As soon as the ball and runner collide, the ball is declared dead. Since the contact occurred in fair territory, the batter-runner is out by application of the infield fly rule and runners are returned to the bases occupied at the time of the pitch. Had the contact occurred in foul territory, the correct call would have been foul ball.  

Even though the batter-runner had been declared out on the infield fly and subsequent contact occurred, it is not batter-runner interference because no fielder was attempting to make a play at the time of the contact.
SOFTBALL WHYS - How does the defense get an interference call on a batter-runner who is out of the runner’s lane when note 1 says “the batter-runner has not interfered if a fielder does not throw, hesitates before throwing or makes an errant throw.” If the catcher fields a batted ball right in front of home plate, and the batter-runner is in her line to throw to first base, what is she to do?

RULE FOUNDATION - A.R. 12.19.2.1.4 Note 1

COMMENT - If the fielder does not throw, hesitates and then throws late to a base, or makes an errant throw, it is not possible to determine if the fielder receiving the throw would have been interfered with. For example, if the catcher throws the ball three feet above the outstretched glove of the first baseman, the batter-runner will be safe by virtue of the throwing error not because the first baseman was receiving a throw and then was interfered with. If the catcher fields a batted ball and takes a step inside the diamond, throws and the first baseman is unable to make the play because the batter-runner is out of the runner’s lane, that would be interference.

A.R.12.19.2^1: The rule says the base runner may not contact a fair batted ball, while off base, before it touches a fielder or before it passes an infielder (other than the pitcher) who has a reasonable chance to make a play. So doesn’t that apply to just about every batted ball because the first and third basemen play up toward the batter’s boxes which means the batted ball always passes an infielder?

RULING: No, the rule refers to a ball that is within range of an infielder but has not yet reached her. A base runner cannot contact that batted ball while running in front of the first baseman with a chance to field it. So a ball hit directly to the second baseman would be judged when it passes her; not when it passes the first baseman who had no play on it. The first baseman’s position is irrelevant because she is not expected to field a batted ball hit directly to the second baseman.

A.R.12.19.2^2: Base runner on first base with no one out. The first baseman is playing in for the bunt but the batter hits a screaming line drive to the first baseman’s right that the second baseman also has absolutely no chance of reaching. The ball hits off the base runner’s shoulder (who is off the base) and dribbles into right field. The batter-runner barely beats the throw from the right fielder to first base. Is interference called?

RULING: The base runner may not contact an untouched, fair batted ball, after it passes an infielder if another fielder has a chance to make a play so if, in the umpire’s judgment, the right fielder had a chance to make a play, rule interference. The rule is not intended to protect only the four infielders but any fielder, regardless of where she is positioned.

A.R.12.19.2.1.4^1: With the bases loaded and no one out, the batter hits a declared infield fly right in the baseline between first and second bases. The base runner, on her return to first base following her lead-off, runs into the first baseman attempting to field the fly ball. 1) The base runner from third base tags and advances home; 2) the base runners on second and third bases do not attempt to advance. In either case, is this interference even though the base runner contacts the fielder who is already credited with the put out and is not making an additional play?

RULING: In both cases, the batter is out on the infield fly and the ball is immediately dead when the base runner interferes with the first baseman making the catch. The base runner from first base is out on interference and the other base runners must return to the bases held at the time of the interference.

A.R.12.19.2.1.4^2: With no one out and a base runner on third base, the batter squibs a ball down the third base line. The third baseman charges the ball with her glove down in fair territory but her feet in foul territory as if she is going to scoop up the ball to make a throw to first base. The base runner, also in foul territory, makes slight contact with the fielder before she touches the ball which does eventually roll off the chalk into foul territory.

RULING: The ball is dead as soon as the base runner contacts the fielder regardless of where the contact occurs (fair or foul territory) but the result of the play will be subject to the umpire’s judgment. Rule interference if the fielder might have had a play on the ball while it was fair or if the ball would have been fair at the time she contacted it. But if the ball was going to remain foul or be foul when the fielder could have gotten to it, rule the ball foul. Interference only applies to fair balls, foul fly balls and foul ground balls that might become fair. In all other cases a foul ball and no interference is ruled but the benefit of the doubt goes to the defense.

A.R.12.19.2.1.4^3: There are base runners on first and second bases when a slow roller is hit to the second baseman. The base runner leaving first base makes minor contact with the fielder as she crossed the baseline to field the batted ball. The second baseman was able to shovel the ball to first base for the out which was the only play she had. Since the second baseman was not denied the opportunity to make a play, is it a no call or does the contact constitute interference?

RULING: The effect for a base runner contacting a fielder in the act of fielding a batted ball is an immediate dead ball so in this case, you would not know if she could or could not have completed a play. Although the contact was not catastrophic, contact was made and in an effort to discourage all inappropriate contact and to protect the fielder who is concentrating on the batted ball (and is therefore usually blindsided by the base runner), the ball is immediately dead, the base runner is out and other base runners returned to the bases they held at the time of the interference.
A.R.12.19.2.1.4*: With a base runner on second base, the ball is hit to the third baseman’s left and is deflected by her toward the middle of the infield. The shortstop moves to make a play on the deflected ball but is unintentionally contacted by the base runner so she makes no throw.

RULING: If the contact was unintentional, it is not interference. The base runner cannot reasonably be expected to anticipate the direction and speed of a carom off a defender and avoid contact with a second fielder moving to play the ball. However, if the umpire judges that the base runner intentionally interferes with the second fielder, apply the effect in Rule 12.19.2.1.4.

SOFTBALL WHYS- On a batted ball that is knocked down, but not cleanly fielded, what protection is afforded the fielder as she attempts to play the deflection?

RULE FOUNDATION- A.R.12.19.2.1.4

COMMENT- In general, the defender is protected when she is the first fielder to play a batted ball but she retains protection only when she knocks the ball in front of her and it remains within a step and a reach. If the ball is deflected further away or goes beyond the fielder, she is no longer protected as she is then recovering a loose ball rather than fielding a batted ball.

A.R.12.19.2.3: Base runners are on first and third bases when the batter receives ball four. As the batter-runner is advancing to first base, the base runner who was on first base, advances toward second base. For some unknown reason, the pitcher throws the ball to the shortstop, and she plays on the base runner between first and second bases. Immediately after the throw from the pitcher, the lead runner from third base scores. The base runner, who is in a rundown between first and second bases, then deliberately slaps the ball away from the shortstop who is tossing the ball to the first baseman for a potential tag.

RULING: The run scores during the live ball rundown. At the time of the slapped ball, the umpire should immediately declare the ball dead to stop additional action and since there is no play to be made, award the base runner who was forced to advance, second base and the batter-runner first on the walk. There is no play to be made because the base runners were only advancing to the bases they were awarded on the walk and not beyond.

A.R.12.19.2.5: With a base runner on first base, the batter hits a ground ball to the second baseman. She fields the ball cleanly and tosses it to the shortstop for the first out of the inning. The shortstop attempts to throw the ball to first base to complete a double play however her throw hits the base runner’s helmet as she is in the baseline half way between first and second base. The batter-runner reaches first base safely as the ball drops to the ground near the base runner. Because the ball deflected off a base runner who was already out, does Rule 12.19.2.5 apply?

RULING: The base runner closest to home would be declared out if a retired runner interfered with a defender’s opportunity to make a play. However if, in the umpire’s judgment, the base runner was acting appropriately and was not reasonably expected to slide because she was not near a base nor assumed to intentionally put her head in the path of a thrown ball to interfere, then the ball would remain live and play would stand without additional penalty to the out at second base.

A.R.12.19.2.7.3: With the bases loaded and no outs, a batted ball ricochets off the pitcher and just as the shortstop is about to field the slow roller, the ball hits the base runner leaving second base. Must the base runner attempt to avoid the deflected ball?

RULING: Once the ball ricochets off the pitcher, the base runner is not out if hit by the batted ball unless the umpire rules the base runner intentionally initiated the contact with the ball or intentionally interferes with the shortstop as she fields the ball to make a play. Having time to avoid the contact may be different than intentionally getting hit. (See also Rule 12.6.4, 12.17.2 and 12.19.2.1.4)

SOFTBALL WHYS- Making the effect for a base runner leaving early a delayed dead ball seems counter to the efforts being made to speed up the game. Instead of the immediate out, the umpires huddle, then huddle with the defensive coach, then have to explain the result to the offensive coach and finally move the runners and batter to their proper position. Doesn’t this unnecessarily add to the length of the game?

RULE FOUNDATION- Rule 12.20

COMMENT- Transitioning from an immediate dead ball to a delayed dead ball for the effect of leaving the base early on a pitch is definitely a more complicated effect however it can be simplified by remembering to handle all other rule violations first and making that the first option for the defensive coach. The second option always remains the same as the traditional penalty of “No Pitch” and the violator being declared out. If leaving early happens often in a game, yes a game might become a few minutes longer. Adding leaving early to the short list of option plays is intended to be a disincentive to violating the rule because the defensive coach will always be able to select the more devastating penalty. The NCAA Softball Rules Committee was looking for a solution to the increase in complaints about opponents leaving early and not being declared out, multiple base runners leaving early on the same pitch and the defensive disadvantage if the defense makes a great play on a batted ball that is negated by the immediate dead ball when an opponent left early. So the intended consequence is runners will not leave early, there will be no options to discuss and play will not be lengthened.

A.R.12.20^1: If a play involves both leaving early and a defensive rule violation, should the umpires move the runners based on the offensive coach’s decision and then again once the defensive coach makes his/her decision?

RULING: Like the other option plays, base runners should not be taken off bases nor advanced based on the first option selection if the defense also has an option to choose. Players should be moved only following the final decision.
A.R.12.20*2: May a base runner who mistimes leaving the base on a pitch, reset herself and as long as she is back in contact with the base at the time the pitch is released, not be in violation of this rule?

RULING: No, the rule says the base runner may not leave the base until the pitcher releases the pitch to the batter so once she breaks contact with the base, even if she tries to reestablish contact before release, she would be in violation and the umpire will have signaled delayed dead ball.

A.R.12.20*3: With a base runner on first base, the pitcher licks her fingers and delivers the pitch without wiping her hand, the base runner leaves early, and the batter hits into a 6-4-3 double play however the shortstop is an illegal player.

RULING: The resolution will depend on the timing of the report of the illegal player but let’s start with the sequences most advantageous to the offense. The illegal pitch is addressed before leaving early so the options on the illegal pitch are for the offense to have their two players out from the double play or award a ball to the batter and advance the base runner to second base. (Rule 10.8) Obviously the offense will take the latter so that becomes option one for the defense…base runner on second and batter still at the plate or the penalty for leaving early (Rule 12.20) which is the base runner is out and the batter still at the plate. Obviously the defense will take the latter. Now that play is about to resume and before the pitch to the next batter, the offensive coach could notify the umpire of the illegal player who will then be ejected and the coach will have the option of the result of the play (no one on, batter at the plate) or nullify the play and have the batter return to the plate with no one on (Rule 8.3.4.2.4 effect but there is no base runner to advance). Notifying the umpire at this time does not have the maximum effect but it does remove the shortstop from play so that would be a decision the coach would have to make. Of course, the coach could allow the illegal player to stay and report it at a more advantageous time when base runners would advance.

The other timing option is for the offensive coach to bring the illegal player to the attention of the umpires before they resolve the illegal pitch and leaving early infractions but by doing so, the last option would belong to the defense for the leaving early violation. As in the other cases, the shortstop would be ejected but the offense will give up their ability to make the final selection of results.

A.R.12.20^4: The base runner on first base leaves before the release of the pitch because the pitcher holds onto the ball and does not release it until a second rotation of the arm past the hip. Is the base runner out after being duped by the illegal pitch?

RULING: Both infractions result in a delayed dead ball and as with all other cases of a base runner leaving early, you resolve the other infractions first and then address leaving early. So the coach of the offensive team can take the results of the play (not mentioned here) or the penalty for an illegal pitch (see Rule 10.8). Whichever is selected, that becomes option one for the defensive coach who can choose that or the traditional effect for leaving early (see Rule 12.20).

Look-Back Rule

A.R.12.21: Last half of the seventh inning with the score tied and a base runner on first base with one out. The batter hits a sharp ground ball to the third baseman who makes a great play and gets the force out at second base. The ball is thrown back to the pitcher in the circle and the batter-runner is on first base when the pitcher decides to run to the third baseman to give her a high five for a good play. Seeing her leave the circle, the base runner takes off and slides safely into second base. The defensive coach protests that the base runner could not leave her base once the ball was in the circle.

RULING: If the pitcher carries the ball out of the circle, the look-back rule is not in effect and base runners are free to advance with liability to be put out.

A.R.12.21.4: With a base runner on third base, the batter receives a base on balls and the ball immediately goes back to the pitcher in the circle. The batter-runner crosses first base and continues down the right field line, making an arc deep into the right field grass and continuing her arc towards second base. A bit confused, the pitcher cocks her arm in an obvious attempt at a play on the batter-runner at which time, the base runner on third base leaves her base and inches toward home plate. The pitcher now brings her arm back down to her side so that she is no longer making a play. Is the look-back rule back in effect and does the base runner on third base have to immediately make a decision to return to third base or advance to home? Does the batter-runner have to continue to second base after the pitcher is no longer making a play or is she allowed to stop and assess the play even though the pitcher is no longer making a play on her?

RULING: Once the pitcher makes a play, both runners are released from the restrictions of the look-back rule. It is not a time related play (meaning, the base runner is free only during the time the pitcher is making a play); it is all or nothing (that is, if the pitcher makes a play, the base runners are released; if the pitcher makes no play, the base runners are restricted to their bases). The fact that the pitcher started to make a play and changed her mind (and stopped) does not shorten the amount of time the base runners have to advance or return. So now that the pitcher is making a play, the runners may stay, advance or retreat but if a stalemate occurs because the runners and pitcher are not continuing to play, the umpire may suspend play and return the runners to their bases in order to resume play.
**A.R.12.21.6.1:** There are no outs and base runners are on first and second bases when the batter singles to right field. The throw goes directly from the right fielder to the pitcher who is in the pitcher’s circle. The batter-runner is standing on first base; the speedy base runner who started on first base advanced all the way to third base; the slower base runner who started on second base, advanced to third base, rounded it but decided to return which puts two runners on third base at the time the pitcher receives the ball. For a few seconds, the pitcher is oblivious to the two runners together until 1) a teammate yells to her to throw the ball to third base so the trailing runner can be tagged out; 2) she looks at third base but makes no play.

**RULING:** 1) If the pitcher initiates a play, the runners are no longer restricted to their bases so the trailing runner can retreat or the lead runner advance. The ball is live and players are in jeopardy of being put out. 2) The trailing runner is called out for not being in contact with her base (second) once the look back rule was in effect. The pitcher is under no obligation to make a play.

**A.R.12.21.6.3:** There’s a base runner on first base following a single. The pitcher has possession of the ball in the circle when: 1) with only a single foot on the base, the base runner lifts it off the base to clean off the bottom of her cleats, thus breaking contact with the base; 2) the base runner takes a step off the base to hand her base coach the elbow guard she uses for batting; 3) the base runner walks off the base to groom the dirt area which she churned up as she ran out her single. In all cases, the base runner does not attempt to advance, gains no advantage, so should the umpire ignore the violation?

**RULING:** In all three cases, the base runner should be called out unless she asked for and was granted time by the umpire. The umpire should enforce the rule without assigning intent of the base runner or whether or not an advantage is gained. Call all aspects of the game based on the objective actions that are displayed rather than to assign value or intent and then decide if the action warrants a penalty. For some, that might seem “nitpicky” but if does provide predictable, consistent application of the rules without having to judge intent OR whether or not a “real” advantage is gained. That said, it is good preventative umpiring to anticipate these possible actions. For example, if the area around the base is churned up at the conclusion of play, the umpire can suspend play in anticipation of the player’s desire to smooth the ground. If the base runner then simply walks off the base without requesting time, you have no violation as play is already suspended. Bottom line, however, is that players are responsible for adhering to the playing rules and the rules committee does not favor the slippery slope of ignoring rule violations when there’s no intent to violate the rules or when there’s no significant advantage to be gained. (See also Rule 12.20.)

**Missing a Base**

**A.R.12.22.1:** A base runner is assumed to have acquired a base even if she misses it but what constitutes missing a base? Clearly if a base runner rounds a base but misses the corner, an appeal for missing a base applies but what if the base runner is forced to avoid several players at the advancing base of a rundown and she misses the base by ten feet and then attempts to circle back?

**RULING:** If a base runner passes a base but has failed to touch it, she is considered to have touched it if she is within a body’s length. If she is further than that from the base, she has not yet acquired it for the purpose of base awards and appeals. (See also Rules 7.1.1.2 and 12.28.)

**A.R.12.22.3:** With a base runner on second base, the batter hits a single. The base runner misses third base on her way toward home plate but decides to retreat to it once she sees the throw come from the outfield to the catcher. On her retreat, she collides with the third baseman who then receives a throw from the catcher and tags her out. The umpire awards the base runner third base on the obstruction. Can the defense still appeal that the base runner missed third base in order to get the out?

**RULING:** No the appeal is not upheld because the base runner returned to the missed base on the obstruction award. (See Rule 9.5.2.)

**A.R.12.22.5**

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The batter singles to the outfield with the bases loaded and one out. The base runner from third base scores and the coach holds up the next base runner at third base. The base runner from first base is halfway between second and third bases and heading back to second base. The batter-runner has rounded second base. Upon seeing the base runner ahead of her retreating, the batter-runner cuts through the infield, does not retouch second base, but returns to first base. A fan is yelling for her to go back to touch second base. The batter-runner leaves first base and the defense throws to the first baseman to tag her (although she is confused as to why.) A rundown ensues with the batter-runner between first and second bases. In the meantime, the base runner from third base tries to score and is thrown out. While that tag is applied at the plate, both remaining base runners move up to third and second bases respectively. When play ends, the defense appeals that the batter-runner standing on second base did not retouch it on the way back to first base.

Pertinent summary – the steps of the batter-runner who is standing on second base were: touched first base, touched second base, missed second base on way back to first base, touched first base, standing on second base. Is she out on appeal for not re-touching second base on the way back to first base?

**RULING:** Upon appeal, the batter-runner is out for failing to re-touching second base. She is the third out, although the runner who started on third base does score because the third out is not a force out.
A.R.12.22.5^2: The batter hits a ball that the right fielder dives for but misses so it rolls all the way to the foul pole. The batter-runner misses first base but touches all the rest including home plate when her teammates get her attention and tell her to touch first base. Without leaving the field, she runs directly to first base, touches it, and slides safely into second base by the time the ball is returned to the infield.

RULING: The batter-runner may return to touch a missed base while the ball is live however she must touch all bases in reverse order in order to nullify missing a base. If properly appealed, she would be declared out. If not appealed, play would continue with the player on second base as if she had just hit a double. (See also Rule 7.1.4 and 12.28.3.)

A.R.12.22.5^3: With no one out and a base runner on first base, the batter hits a fly ball to left field that looks to be beyond the left fielder but she miraculously catches it. The base runner advances and rounds second base and seeing the catch, retreats directly to first base without retouching second base. The left fielder excitedly throws the ball to first base but the ball sails out of play. 1) Because the base runner had touched second base, is the two base award to home plate? 2) If the base runner is awarded third base on the over throw, can she abandon her path to first base to retouch second base, then tag up at first base and then accept the two base award? 3) Or because the ball is dead, can she simply go to third base?

RULING: 1) The two base award would be to third base since the base runner last legally occupied first base. 2) Even though the ball is dead, if the base runner does not retouch second base, return to first base and then advance to second and third bases, she is vulnerable to an appeal. 3) If the base runner simply goes to third base, she would be vulnerable to an appeal for having not retouched second base.

Base Paths
A.R.12.25.1: Following a pitch, the base runner from first base walks slowly toward second base, following the edge of the outfie ld grass. The catcher has possession of the ball and watches as the base runner stops midway between the second baseman and her base. To force the action, the catcher returns the ball to the pitcher in the circle who does nothing except look around. When the pitcher receives the ball, the base runner begins to move toward second base taking tiny little steps, moving very slowly along the edge of the outfield grass trying to draw a throw. At what point does this non-traditional base path become a travesty of the game?

RULING: The base runner has rulebook support to establish her own base path as long as no fielder has possession of the ball and is attempting a tag. The look-back rule requires her to continue her direction, without change, now that the ball is in the pitcher’s possession in the circle and she is not making a play. In the end, the runner still must come to the base and the defense may choose to play on her or not but it would be hard to apply travesty of the game to this legal base running.

A.R.12.25.2^1: With a base runner on third base, the batter dribbles a ball down the first base line. The first baseman, charges the ball and throws home to play on the base runner advancing from third base. The throw strikes the batter-runner, who is not in the running lane, and caroms away from the catcher. There is no play at the plate and the batter-runner safely advances to second base.

RULING: It is not interference under rule 12.25.2 because the batter–runner is not required to be in the runner’s lane when the play is not being made at first base. That said though, Rule 12.2.12 might apply which results in an immediate dead ball and both the base runner and batter-runner would be declared out if the umpire ruled interference. If however the batter-runner is running toward first base and a wild throw contacts her, the play could result in a no call with the ball remaining live.

A.R.12.25.2^2: With a base runner on third base, the batter receives a base on balls and trots down to first base. After she is half way and the running lane has started, the catcher throws to first base in an attempt to keep the batter-runner from continuing to second base. 1) The throw hits the batter-runner who is in fair territory or 2) the throw hits a part of the runner’s body which is over fair territory although her feet are both in the running lane. Is this interference?

RULING: On the base award, the batter-runner cannot be put out solely as a result of a defender’s action; that is to say, the batter-runner must somehow contribute to being declared out by violating a rule.

In the first situation, the batter-runner has violated Rule 12.25.2 (also 12.19.1.4.2) which stipulates she shall not run outside the runner’s lane and interfere with the fielder taking the throw at first base. The batter-runner has interfered with a play so the ball is dead, the batter-runner is out and each other runner returns to her base. In the second situation, there is no interference since the batter-runner’s feet are within the runner’s lane. (See also Rule 12.19.1.4 note 2.) The ball is live and runners may advance at their own risk. Note that in the second example, if the batter-runner, even though she is in the runner’s lane, intentionally interferes by waving her hands, interference would be enforced.

A.R.12.25.2^3: The score is tied in the bottom of the seventh inning with the bases loaded and two outs. The batter has a full count and the next pitch is ball four. As she is heading to first base and the winning run is coming in to score, the catcher throws the ball toward first base and hits the batter-runner in the back while she is in fair territory rather than in the runner’s lane. The defensive coach believes the runner should be called out for interference as noted in the previous play which would end the inning still tied.

RULING: This play is slightly different than the previous one in that the game will be over once all the forced base runners advance their one base. There is no play to be made on anyone and no reason to throw the ball into the back of the batter-runner. The umpires correctly allow the base runner to score assuming that all base runners complete their base running responsibilities and touch the base to which they were forced.
Tag and Force Plays

A.R.12.26.3: Bases are loaded with one out. The batter hits a deep fly ball to centerfield that hits the top of the fence and is then caught by the centerfielder with her back to the infield. The chasing umpire signals no catch but the base runners on the corners both react as if it is a caught fly ball. The base runner on third base returns to tag up and then heads home to score but is passed by the base runner from second base who clearly saw no catch. At the time she passes the lead runner, the base runner from second base is declared the second out. Meanwhile the base runner from first base had touched second base but then retreated to first base (thinking the ball was caught and she had to tag up). So with the base runner returned to first base and the batter-runner standing on first base, the defense returns the ball to the infield and tags both players. Who is out and does the run score?

RULING: The base runner who occupied first base at the time she was forced to advance because the batter became a batter-runner is the third out and because it is a force out, the run does not score.

A.R.12.26.4: Base runners on first and third bases with two outs. The batter punches the ball up the middle where the shortstop fields it but her only play is at second base. The base runner slides to the outside of the base without touching it and as she tries to reach back, the second baseman tags her out. Meanwhile the base runner from third base crosses home plate before the tag. Does the run score?

RULING: No; the base runner is considered forced out because she was legally tagged out before reaching the base she was forced to advance to by the batter-runner. The force out is the third out so the run does not score.

A.R.12.26.6: With one out and base runners on first and third bases, the batter singles, apparently scoring the base runner from third base. The base runner from first base advances to third base but misses second base. The batter-runner rounds first base and is tagged out for the second out when the defense throws behind her. The defense then appeals the base runner missed second base for the third out but does the run score now that there is no force?

RULING: The run does not score because the base runner who is properly appealed to have missed second base is the third out and she was forced to advance at the time she missed second base.

A.R.12.26.8.1: During a rundown, the fielder who is forcing the base runner to retreat has secure possession of the ball and dives forward to tag the base runner as she attempts to dive back into the trailing base. She tags the base runner’s cleat with the gloved ball but the base runner’s foot flips the ball out of the glove.

RULING: For a tag to be complete, the fielder must maintain secure possession of the ball unless the fielder drops the ball while making a secondary move. In this case, the tag is incomplete and the base runner safe.

Touching the Bases

A.R.12.28.5: A batter hits a deep fly to center field which looks like it will be caught. She runs to first base, head down, touches the base and turns and walks back down the line towards home and her third base dugout. The wind blows the ball down and the center fielder does not catch the ball. The centerfielder picks up the ball and throws it into the infield where the pitcher cuts it off while in the circle. The base coach directs the batter-runner to turn around and run back to first base. The batter-runner stops her retreat to the dugout, looks at the pitcher, then breaks for first base. The pitcher throws the ball to first base where the first baseman tags the batter-runner with the ball. For purposes of correctly scoring the play: Is the batter-runner out when she stepped back towards home? If not, is she out for stopping and reversing her direction with the pitcher hold the ball motionless in the circle? Or is she out on the tag?

RULING: Although a batter-runner may not step back toward home plate to avoid or delay a tag by the fielder, Rule 12.28.5 does not apply because the steps back toward the plate were not to avoid or delay the tag.

The look-back rule allows for a runner who is in motion when the ball is returned to the pitcher within the circle, to continue in the direction she is going or immediately and directly go in the other direction. Once she determines that direction, she cannot change (unless one of the circumstances in Rule 12.21.3 occurs). Therefore, the batter-runner who is dejectedly moving along the foul line toward home as the ball reaches the pitcher in the circle may now choose to reverse her direction and attempt to return to first base. (See also Rule 12.21.) She is however, out on the tag.

A.R.12.28.9: With base runners on first and second bases, the batter hits the ball to the third baseman playing off the line. The lead runner begins to advance but seeing the defender with the ball in the baseline, she retreats to second base. At the same time, the base runner from first base advances and is also on second base. The batter-runner safely reaches first base as the third baseman goes over and tags both base runners on second base. Which base runner is out when tagged?

RULING: In general, the first of two base runners occupying the same base is entitled to hold it until she advances to the next base however the exception is if the base runner is forced to vacate the base. Because the lead runner was forced to advance and did not, she is the one out, not the trailing runner.
Misconduct

Warnings

A.R.13.1*1: Is there any rule against excessive celebration by the offensive team after an out-of-the-park home run? A team gathered at home plate as they usually do and once the batter-runner touched home plate all those gathered around home plate fell down one at a time, as if they were shot.

RULING: This is an example of why warning was officially added to the rules in 2014. In most cases, the umpire should, at a minimum, issue a warning to the head coach that should an orchestrated celebration occur again, it will be considered unsporting and the violator(s) will be ejected. Failure to do so may result in the opposing team taking it upon themselves to deliver “diamond justice” that opens the door for throwing at batters, hard tags and collisions. However, considering the context of the specific game, the umpires also have the option of not warning the team and instead immediately applying the traditional effect for unsporting behavior or verbal misconduct in Rule 13.2.

Ejections

SOFTBALL WHYS- All types of misconduct, whether using the newly defined categories of administrative or behavioral or not, result in an ejection, so why has the rule become more complicated? In all cases, the offender is out for the game and unless involved in a fight or brawl, there are no additional consequences.

RULE FOUNDATION: Rule 13.2

COMMENT: The purpose of the two categories is to provide context to those with oversight responsibilities for a collegiate softball program because most other sports have ejections only for misconduct, not for violation of a rule. In general and somewhat unique to softball, an administrative ejection is given for rule violations regarding equipment, lineup management, conferences, and warm-up activities.

In general, a behavioral ejection is given for rule violations relating to play including all violations of Rule 13 and actions of batters, runners, pitchers and fielders. Many of these ejections are a result of unsporting behavior.

For associations, conferences or institutions which levy additional non-participation penalties for ejections, this distinction can be useful in determining if an ejection would be exempt from an additional penalty.

A.R.13.2*1: Umpires have described trick plays being used by teams designed solely to deceive their opponent and gain an advantage. Offensive Example: With a base runner on first base, the batter has a two ball count. The next pitch is called a ball but the batter drops her bat and proceeds to first base. The base runner on first base advances to second base. The umpires return the batter to plate to complete her turn at bat but the base runner remains at second base. Later in the game, the offensive coach comments to the plate umpire “that play works every time.”

Defensive Example: Base runner on third base. Following a pitch, the catcher bounces out to simulate a pick off, stumbles and falls without releasing the ball. The third baseman, shortstop, and left fielder all act like they are chasing an overthrow. As the base runner attempts to score, she is tagged out by the catcher.

Are these plays legal or a form of interference/obstruction since their sole purpose is to deceive the opponent?

RULING: There are lots of elements of the game designed to deceive the opponent and gain an advantage....for example, throwing pitches other than straight fastballs is designed to deceive the opponent as is taking a batting stance and then changing to bunt at the last second. So penalizing the use of trick plays on the basis that they deceive the opponent is not valid.

Now are they unsporting? There’s more of an argument here but even then there are examples of situations that might be planned and others that might actually be mistakes and differentiating might be impossible. Clearly a practiced and executed hidden ball trick is easily identifiable but a batter walking on ball three and a base runner advancing ahead of her may or may not be intentional. So the short of it is that the onus is on the players (both offensive and defensive), coaches and umpires to know what is going on in the game and not be duped.

A.R.13.2*2: What is the penalty if an ejected coach, although beyond the outfield fence, talks to a player in the bullpen who then goes to the dugout and relays, or apparently relays, information to the coaching staff?

RULING: Coaches are accountable for knowing the rules and that this is a violation which results in a forfeit. The coach was removed from further participation in the game and using a student-athlete to mitigate his/her removal is indefensible. Under Rules 13.2 and 13.14.2, the game shall be forfeited to the team not in violation.

A.R.13.2*3: A home run and sideline fences completely surround a softball playing field and a second fence completely surrounds the softball venue (which includes the grandstands, concession stand and press box). A coach is ejected and does not choose to go beyond the home run fence but instead leaves the complex (outside the second fence) to sit on an elevated tv camera platform which is outside the venue fence but above the press box.

RULING: The effect in Rule 13.2 provides an ejected coach with an opportunity to supervise the team by watching from beyond the home run fence or to leave the complex and be out of sight of the game and beyond where they can be heard by the umpires. Observing the game from the tv platform does not comply with out of sight and sound and therefore results in forfeit if observed by an umpire. If observed by the on-site administrator, the OSA should immediately escort the ejected person to an appropriate location.
A.R.13.3: A player is ejected under Rule 13.3 for a scuffle at the plate in the last game of a conference series. The next day, her team has a scheduled, non-conference doubleheader which is rained out in the fourth inning of the first game. Although the ejected and suspended player is withheld from the four innings, it becomes no game when the weather takes a turn for the worse. The following day, her team begins a conference series. Is the player eligible to play in the conference series?

RULING: No, the player has not served the suspension. Although the games were previously scheduled, they were not played by virtue of being declared “no game” due to weather. The player must still serve her two game suspension.

A.R.13.5.2: In the bottom of the seventh inning of the first game of a Sunday doubleheader, with two outs and a 2-2 count, the pitcher believes she delivered a strike but the umpire called the pitch a ball. On the next pitch, the batter hits a game winning, out-of-the-park homerun and as she circles the bases, she taunts the defense. A shoving match ensues at the plate and in the end, two players from each team are issued post game ejections. While the home team has sufficient players to play game two, the visitors do not. Can the visiting coach request the penalties be staggered by the conference commissioner and if yes, how is that verified by the umpires prior to game two?

RULING: Because the visiting team is unable to field a team due to ejections, the visiting team must forfeit the second game of the doubleheader and all four players will serve their ejections in the next regularly scheduled and played game (Rule 13.5.1). The staggering option in Rule 13.5.2 is only permissible in the event that a team is unable to field a team due to player suspensions (not ejections). Had that been the case, the coach would be responsible for contacting the conference commissioner to obtain permission to play a specific player in the second game and defer her suspension in order to field a team. If permission could not be obtained prior to the scheduled start time of the second game, the game would be forfeited. If coach reported to the umpires that permission had been granted, the SRE would be responsible for verification so the umpire’s roll would be to file the incident report at their earliest opportunity.

Scoring

A.R.14.2.7: In the top of the fourth inning, the home team is ahead 3-7. The visiting team has base runners on first and third base with one out. The base runner on first base takes off for second base on a typical play when the batter takes the pitch for a called strike. The catcher only looks at the lead base runner and makes no effort to throw out the base runner stealing second base. Is the base runner credited with a stolen base, or is it defensive indifference since the defense obviously was willing to allow the offense to take the base?

RULING: The intent of defensive indifference is to only address the specific situation where the outcome of the game dictates that the smart play would be no play. It does not apply to the situation described above in the first and third play (but it would have if it was in the last inning and the runner on third was the winning run). In all other cases, the play would continue to be scored as it was in the past. The NCAA Softball Rules Committee made this distinction not only because of seventh inning plays but also because bases are often advanced uncontested in the home half of the tiebreaker. Those bases, in those specific cases, will now not count against the catcher nor credited to the runner.

A.R.14.5.4*1: With the bases loaded, the batter hits a towering fly ball that falls in the glove of the centerfielder at the warning track and then squirts out over the home run fence in fair territory. Is that a home run/grand slam or a four run error?

RULING: Rules 14.5.4 and 12.12.5.2 both refer to a fair batted fly ball that deflects over the fence as a home run without an exception for an error. There is an exception in 12.12.3.5 for a batted ball that caroms off the fence into the field of play and then off the fielder over the fence for a ground rule double but that is the only exception at this time.

A.R.14.5.4*2: The batter seemingly hit a home run as the ball cleared the home run fence after bouncing off of an outfielder without touching the ground. However, the official scorer ruled the play as a double and then awarded the batter home plate with no error assessed. It would seem to be a home run, or a double with a two base error assessed to the outfielder whose body it deflected off of over the home run fence.

RULING: See Rules 14.5.4 and 12.12.5.2 for when it is scored a home run and 12.12.3.5 for when it is scored a double. The official scorer should be contacted and ask for this misapplication of the rule to be corrected. This is a correctable error even after the game has ended.

A.R.14.7.1.3: With a base runners on first and third bases and one out, the batter hits a ground ball into the left centerfield gap. The base runner from third base trots home and the base runner from first base misses second base but touches third and home to score a second run. The batter-runner is throw out at second base by the left fielder for the second out. The defense appeals the missed base.

RULING: When properly appealed, the base runner from first base is declared out for the third out of the inning and, because it was a force out, no runs score and the batter is credited with a fielder’s choice, not a hit. If the base runner had missed third base rather than second base and a proper appeal was made, the base runner from third base would score, the base runner who started on first base would be out on a timing play and the batter would be credited with a single. See also Rules 6.1.4 and 7.1.1.2.
A.R.14.12: The offensive coach tells a player she will lead off the next inning but fails to report the substitution to the plate umpire. After the first pitch, the defensive coach brings the unreported substitution to the umpire’s attention. The umpire signals an out. The scorer sets the outs to one in Stat Crew and the batter to be the next batter; charging the at-bat to no one but crediting the catcher with an unassisted putout. Rule 8.3.3 reads that after the notification to the umpire, the player is officially in the game so that implies the at-bat is not hers because she was not yet in the game. The scorer does not charge the original player with an at-bat because she was and still is in the dugout. Since the box score will no longer proof, can the scorer allow for that similar to the box score not proofing when a base runner is placed on base and subsequently scores in the tie breaker?  
RULING: No, the tie breaker is the only exception for a box score not proofing. In this case, charge the batter who was scheduled to bat with the at-bat even though she never left the dugout (see Rule 8.3.3.3.1). The next batter is still the batter who follows the player called out on the line-up card and the substitute is now officially in the game.

A.R.14.16: With a base runner on third base and one out, the coach calls for a suicide squeeze. The batter misses the pitch on the bunt attempt, the base runner from third base leaves on release of the pitch, is caught in a rundown, and eventually putout. Since the first throw by the catcher is to the trailing base would it be scored a pick-off or since she was trying to advance, would it be caught stealing?  
RULING: It would be scored as caught stealing. The general rule is to determine the action of the base runner at the beginning of the play and apply the appropriate scoring. If the base runner would have been credited with a stolen base at the conclusion of a successful play, she would be charged with caught stealing if unsuccessful. If the base runner was merely leading off with the pitch, her options would be return safely or be picked off. Unlike baseball, the location of the first throw is not relevant to the decision.

A.R.14.21: Is a catch and carry play scored as an error?  
RULING: First, if there are no base runners and since the batter is put out on the catch, there is no error charged to a fielder who carries the caught ball into dead ball territory because there is essentially no benefit given to the offense. However, with one or more base runners...whether or not to charge an error is subject to the judgment of the scorer. If a ball is easily caught and, with ordinary effort, the fielder could have stayed in live ball territory (in the judgment of the scorer), charge a single error to the fielder regardless of the number of base runners awarded bases on catch and carry. By doing so, should one or more of the base runners score because they advanced a base on the award(s), this would not unjustly penalize the pitcher and her ERA. Conversely, in the judgment of the scorer, if the catch was made with extraordinary effort, the fielder could not have completed the catch without going into dead ball territory or the fielder could not have remained in live ball territory immediately following the catch, an error should not be charged to the fielder. In general, fielders making extraordinary plays resulting in putouts are not expected to obtain additional outs or prevent base runners from advancing so in these cases, the fielder should not be unjustly penalized. (See also Rule 14.22.)

A.R.14.30.6: Because softball is often a game with lead changes allowed by multiple pitchers and starting pitchers have reentry rights, how are the pitchers of record determined other than the obvious situations covered in the rule book?  
RULING: The easiest way to determine the pitchers of record is to consider it a new game every time the score is tied which means any pitcher who has been replaced by another pitcher, cannot be the pitcher of record unless she reenters the game. In addition, any pitcher who has been replaced by another pitcher cannot receive the win if her team loses the lead. Having eliminated those pitchers from consideration, apply the principles in 14.30.6 and 14.30.7 to determine the winning and losing pitchers.

Umpires

A.R.15.1: May umpires wear pink shirts for a pink out game for breast cancer?  
RULING: There’s been lots of discussion across NCAA sports in how to handle these and other charitable, recognition type events. Like most other sports, the softball rules do not allow for pink umpire shirts, pants, caps or other significant parts of the umpire uniform. However umpires may wear a single memorial ribbon pin or small memorial ribbons pinned to the right panel of their caps or on the shirt over the heart for these special games. Attire for softball umpires is already a more expensive proposition than in most sports with the need for protective equipment and cold weather gear in addition to different sized attire for base and plate games which makes the NCAA Softball Rules Committee sensitive to adding additional expenses...even for the multitude of worthy causes and even if some or all of the commemorative gear is donated.

A.R.15.1.2: May a plate umpire continue to wear a blue ball bag when wearing the allowable alternate heather gray pants or does the wording of the rule change require an umpire who wears gray pants to wear a gray ball bag?  
RULING: The intent of the new rule was to allow the gray ball bag but not to eliminate the traditional blue one. So although the wording in the book is misleading, plate umpires wearing the heather gray pants may choose to wear either the traditional blue or heather gray ball bag.

...
A.R.15.2.3: Bottom of the seventh inning with the visiting team ahead by one run. With a base runner on second base, the batter hits a game ending home run. The runners complete their base running responsibilities; the umpires return the game balls to the on-site administrator and walk 25 feet to their dressing room. Shortly after their arrival, the visiting coach arrives and asks the plate umpire if the player who hit the home run had been re-entered and after reviewing the line-up card, the umpire determined she had not. The crew then re-dressed and returned to the field to resume the game based on the unreported re-entry. The game eventually went into extra innings and the visiting team won.

RULING: The umpires’ jurisdiction began when they arrived on the field and reported to the host coach, and it ended when they left the confines of the field after the game. There is no rule book support for resuming the game once their jurisdiction ended. Therefore, the results of the game are a win by the home team. Even though the home coach did not protest the resumption of the game, the events that transpired after the umpire’s jurisdiction ended are void.

A.R.15.2.15^2: Bases loaded with no outs, full count, and a 3-2 count on the batter when the plate umpire calls the next pitch a ball. The defensive team appeals a checked swing and when all the other base runners are moving up on what appears to be a base on balls, the base umpire confirms the swing which results in the batter being declared out. The base runners are now all off their bases and the base runner from third base is tagged out advancing home.

RULING: Although the batter is out on strikes, the base runners are placed back on their original bases and no base runners are declared out. The umpires may rectify a situation where the reversal of an umpire decision or a delayed dead ball by an umpire places a batter-runner, a runner or the defensive team in jeopardy...in this case an award of first base. This does NOT apply when there is a misapplication of a playing rule, but when a reversal or delayed call puts a team in jeopardy, there is relief. (See also Rule 15.9.3.)

A.R.15.2.15^3: Bases loaded with no outs, full count, and a 3-2 count on the batter when the plate umpire calls the next pitch a ball. The batter-runner advances to first base and all other base runners advance one base and just as the on-deck batter is about to step in the batter’s box, the defensive coach has the catcher request a checked swing. The base umpire confirms the swing and the batter is called out. Are the base runners returned as noted in the previous entry?

RULING: The base runners remain on their bases because they were not in jeopardy at the time of the reversal or delayed call. If the request for the checked swing had been made in a timely manner which placed the players in jeopardy, the runners would have been returned to their previous bases. Note-if there had been two outs, the run would not score because the third out was a strikeout. (See also 15.9.3.)

A.R.15.2.15^4: With regard to Rules 15.2.15 and/or 15.9.3, should the batter-runner be protected under the following circumstances? In the bottom of the eighth inning, with the score tied, one out, and a base runner on third base, the batter hits a ground ball to the second baseman who fields the ball and throws home. The ball and base runner arrive at approximately the same time; the runner uses a wide slide and reaches for home plate with her left hand. On the follow through of the swipe tag attempt, the catcher drops the ball, which slowly rolls away from her onto foul ground beyond the left hand batter’s box. The plate umpire delays, rules “no tag” and signals using a safe signal while the ball is still loose on the ground. However, simultaneously, the catcher scrambles for the ball, as the defensive team is calling “tag her.” The catcher picks up the ball and as she moves to tag the base runner, the base runner makes an attempt to return to the plate but is tagged before she gets to the plate and is called out for the second out of the inning. The batter-runner who had initially passed first base, then abandons the base in the general direction of home plate while the play was happening thinking the game was over based on the umpire’s safe signal. The defense waits for the first baseman, who had moved toward home plate when the ball was loose, to return to first base and then throws the ball to her. The batter-runner, attempting to return to first base, is tagged out between home and first base. Is the batter-runner the third out on the tag or is she protected based on the safe signal of the umpire which caused her to leave her base?

RULING: The batter-runner is not protected during this live ball play. It is the offense’s responsibility to continue play until the umpire suspends play or ends the game. (See also Rule 15.9.3.)

A.R.15.2.15^5: In a game where there is no scoreboard displaying balls and strikes (only runs and outs), there are base runners on first and second bases. The batter is in the batter’s box when the plate umpire gives a verbal and hand signal of a three ball, two strike count. The next pitch is a ball which causes the batter-runner to run to first base and the base runners to advance to the bases they were forced to because of the walk. The catcher makes no attempt to play on the runners. After play ends, the defensive coach questions the count on the batter because only five pitches had been thrown. The umpires confer, it is determined that the correct count is three balls and two strikes after the pitch, and that the plate umpire gave the wrong count. Obviously the batter had to return to the batter’s box to complete her turn-at-bat but are the base runners allowed to stay on the bases they advanced to during the live ball?

RULING: Both teams acted on the misinformation given by the umpire and should neither be advantaged nor disadvantaged. The base runners return to the bases held at the time of the last pitch and the batter resumes her at bat with a full count. This is not the same as if the offense duped the defense into thinking that they could advance in which case, play stands. (See also Rule 15.9.3.)
A.R.15.2.15^6: A batted ball bounces over the home run fence but the batter-runner is incorrectly awarded third base. The offensive team substitutes for the base runner at third base and immediately thereafter, the mistake is discovered and the base runner is correctly moved back to second base on the ground rule double. The offensive coach now does not want to make the substitution. Can it be retracted based on the umpire’s mistake on the base award?

RULING: The substitution was based on the coach thinking the substitute was going to be on third base, not second base AND that belief was based on information from the umpire (awarding her third base on a ground rule double). The substitution may be retracted without penalty prior to the first pitch to the next batter. (See also Rule 15.9.3.)

A.R.15.2.15^7: With runners on first and second bases, the ball goes by the batter’s foot for a ball. After a brief hesitation, the batter runs to first base as if she had been hit by the pitch. The umpire tries to call her back but in the meantime, the base runners each advance and the catcher makes an unsuccessful play on the lead runner. Due to the confusion, the umpire kills the play and returns the batter to the batter’s box and the base runners to first and second bases. The offensive coach claims this is their trick play and the umpires should allow the base runners to stay on their advanced bases because no one reacted to the umpire killing the ball and the catcher’s attempt to put out the lead base runner failed.

RULING: Once the umpire kills the play, it cannot be revived even if players do not react to the umpire’s “Dead ball call” so the base runners must return to first and second bases. However, ideally immediately after the batter starts to advance, the umpire should indicate play continues and allow the defense to choose to play on the offense which is trying to dupe them. Regardless of that result, the batter is called back to the batter’s box since she is not entitled to advance and play resumes.

A.R.15.2.15^8: Can a batted ball declared foul be reversed to be a fair ball? A line drive deflects off the third baseman’s glove into foul territory but the plate umpire was blocked out by the right-handed batter and calls the ball foul. Everyone but the plate umpire saw the fair ball deflect off the third baseman’s glove and the third base umpire in particular was in a credible position to the plate umpire to change the call. In the interest of “getting the call right” can the umpires confer and change the call?

RULING: No, a declared foul ball cannot be revived and made live. That said though, the plate umpire who is vulnerable to being blocked out, should hesitate in declaring a ball down the line and use the cues available to get the call right. If the umpire on the third baseline immediately cuts into the middle of the field, the ball is obviously fair whereas if the umpire remains stationary, the ball must have been foul. Cues are also available from the players although they are less reliable than cues from fellow umpires. When in doubt, signaling a fair ball allows for play to continue and then the umpires can confer and the ball declared foul if additional information necessitates it but the reverse is not true. Rules 15.2.15 and 15.9.3 both allow for rectifying a situation when a delayed call or a reversed call puts a player in undue jeopardy but they do not allow for correcting an umpire’s error in judgment. For example, if an umpire calls a pitch a ball but then immediately knows it was over the strike zone, the umpire cannot just correct the call even in the interest of “getting the call right”.

A.R.15.3.5: The batter has a 3-1 count and although the next pitch is called a ball, no one acknowledges the base on balls. The next pitch is a foul ball. 1) Before the next pitch, the offensive coach asks the plate umpire for the count and it is confirmed to be 4-2. Can the umpire correct the count and award the batter first base even though a pitch has been thrown after the mistake? 2) Following the foul ball, the next pitch is a called strike for strike three. The offensive coach immediately requests the plate umpire award the batter the base on balls she had previously earned, thus negating the strike out. 3) On the next pitch, the batter hits an out-of-the-park home run and the defense coach immediately requests the plate umpire award the batter the base on balls she had previously earned, thus negating the home run?

RULING: 1) Yes, as long as the batter has not completed her turn at bat, the umpire may correct the count. In this case, the batter would be awarded first base because the rules say when a batter receives a fourth ball, she is awarded first base without liability to be put out. Similarly, if a batter leaves the batter’s box headed for the dugout thinking she struck out (but has not) or heads to first base, thinking she walked (but has not), the umpire shall direct her back to the batter’s box to complete her turn at bat. 2 and 3) In both cases, because the batter completed her turn at bat, the window of opportunity to correct the count during her at bat no longer exists. The result of the play remains the action from the last delivered pitch…strikeout in the first case and home run in the second. Note- 15.2.15 and 15.9.3 do not apply as this is not a case of a delayed call or a reversed decision putting a player in undue jeopardy.

A.R.15.9.3 Note: Which takes precedence 15.9.3 Note which says* Once a live ball is declared dead that call cannot be reversed even to correct an apparent mistake" or 15.2.15 which says "The umpires are empowered to rectify any situation in which a delayed call or a reversal of a call on a live ball places a player in undue jeopardy or prevents her/him from making the appropriate play."?

RULING: Actually both rules can be applied as they are not in conflict with each other. The note that follows 15.9.3 refers to not allowing a change from a dead ball to a live ball and 15.2.15 refers to a live ball and the possible need to change a call to negate a negative effect on a player.
Appendices

Appendix D:

1) If a site is doing BCT prior to the game, where can the sticker be placed? 2) What type of sticker should be used and how would an umpire know if the sticker has been switched to a different bat? 3) Does the coach have the option after a player hits a home run to ask to see the bat? If we are looking at game pace, won’t this slow down the game even more? How should the umpires be involved?

RULING: 1) Sticker location: The preferred location is on the taper where it will not affect bat/ball contact nor wear away during play yet provide umpires and opponents with an easy view that the bat has passed. 2) The stickers should be destructible stickers...these are sold to stores that peel apart in pieces and cannot be relocated intact. Many stores use these types of stickers especially for sales because they cannot afford to have customers remove them and relocate them on expensive items not intended to have reduced prices. However, if the stickers are too strong and there’s a question as to if a sticker was transferred to a different bat, the bat should be excluded from play until it can be tested or the bat log from testing can be compared to the bat list presented at the game. This comparison might identify a change in model however it would not indicate if a particular bat passed testing and then that sticker was removed and placed on a bat of the same model that was never tested. 3) You are right on target with not unduly interrupting the pace of the game and avoiding umpire inquisitions. If that situation arises, the opposing coach and plate umpire should each file an incident report. After the home run, the defensive coach should ask if the bat has a sticker, if it looks legitimate, the game resumes; if the sticker appears potentially forged or suspiciously switched, the coach and plate umpire file incident reports which will trigger a conversation between the SRE, the Director of Athletics and Coach. Game results would not be affected regardless of the status of the bat.

Appendix G:

Rather than post guidelines in this appendix, why not just set a national standard for weather?

RULING: The guidelines are intended to provide local professionals assistance as they use their expertise to establish local standards. Local decisions might allow for competition in very hot but low humidity conditions but would cancel the same event at the same temperature if the humidity was very high. Or competition at a low temperature might be canceled at the same temperature if there was a low wind chill once the wind and humidity were factored in. In addition, different decisions might be made if the weather forecast is for diminishing conditions rather than improving conditions. Local experts are better decision makers than establishing a single, nationwide standard that would be applicable to play in all fifty states, in all kinds of climates and circumstances. That said, some conferences do establish specific guidelines and it is the responsibility of the coaches and umpires to know what those standards are and how they are measured. Some are quite specific regarding the website used for data and time it is to be established as canceled, postponed or played.

In any case though, it is the responsibility of the on-site administrator to communicate with the umpire crew about the possibility of threatening weather and keep the crew apprised of the situation as it changes. If the OSA is untrained, hopefully he/she would rely on the institution’s athletic trainers, campus risk management office or other trained personnel to provide the appropriate information which can then be passed on to the umpire crew.
ADDENDUM: Below is the text from the 2014-15 Softball Playing Rules and Interpretations page 16:

**Non-Championship Segment**

The intent of these rule exceptions for the non-championship season is to provide a quality, educational experience for student-athletes and yet provide structure and competitive equity by abiding by all except the following rules:

- Rules 1.111 and .8 that restrict substitutions and limit re-entry rights. In the non-championship season, free substitution and batting out of order shall be allowed, and changes need not be reported through umpires;
- Rule 6.13 Eight-Run Rule may be set aside in order to allow for at least seven innings of play.

In addition to abiding by all the other playing rules published in the current edition of the Softball Rules and Interpretations, participating coaches may agree to the following additions:

1) Participate in experimental rules created by the NCAA Softball Rules Committee, and set aside any playing rules that would then be in conflict;
2) Begin half innings with one or more runners on base;
3) Agree to replay a poorly executed play no more than once per team per inning;
4) Play a maximum of ten innings per game.

In all cases, if participating coaches wish to use one or more exceptions or additions listed above, they must be agreed upon and communicated to the umpire crew no later than the pre-game meeting.

*Note: Institutional scrimmages are not subject to these rules of competition as long as they are limited to participation by appropriate institutional personnel and no outside competitors participate other than those allowed under the alumni exception of the bylaws. Practices with outside competition are also exempt from playing rules but must only display skills of the sport rather than competition between participants.*

Below are the appropriate rule references that are pasted from all three manuals regarding competition. They are fundamentally the same but the underlined text does show a few grammatical differences.

DIVISION I

17.02.2 Contest.
A contest is any game, match, exhibition, scrimmage or joint practice session with another institution’s team, regardless of its formality, in which competition in a sport occurs between an intercollegiate athletics team or individual representing a member institution and any other team or individual not representing the intercollegiate athletics program of the same member institution. (Revised: 1/10/91)

17.02.3 Contest, Countable, Institutional.
A countable contest for a member institution, in those sports for which the limitations are based on the number of contests, is any contest by the member institution against an outside team in that sport, unless a specific exemption for a particular contest is set forth in this bylaw. Contests, including scrimmages, by separate squads of the same team against different outside teams shall each count as one contest.

17.02.8 Intercollegiate Competition.
Intercollegiate competition is considered to have occurred when a student-athlete in either a two-year or a four-year collegiate institution does any of the following: (Revised: 1/10/95)
(a) Represents the institution in any contest against outside competition, regardless of how the competition is classified (e.g., scrimmage, exhibition or joint practice session with another institution’s team) or whether the student is enrolled in a minimum full-time program of studies; (Revised: 1/10/91)

17.02.9 Outside Competition.
Outside competition is athletics competition against any other athletics team (including an alumni team) that does not represent the intercollegiate athletics program of the same institution.

17.02.10 Outside Team.
An outside team is any team that does not represent the intercollegiate athletics program of the member institution or a team that includes individuals other than eligible student-athletes of the member institution (e.g., members of the coaching staff, ineligible student-athletes, members of the faculty).
D\textsc{ivision II} \textit{underlined text indicates differences from DI manual}

17.02.2 Contest.
A contest is any game, match, exhibition, scrimmage or joint practice session with another institution\textsc{'}s team, regardless of its formality, in which competition in a sport occurs between an intercollegiate athletics team or individual representing a member institution and any other outside team or individual not representing the intercollegiate athletics program of the same member institution. (Revised: 1/10/91, 1/12/04)

17.02.3 Contest, Countable, Institutional.
A countable contest for a member institution, in those sports for which the limitations are based on the number of contests, is any contest by the member institution against an outside team in that sport, unless a specific exemption for a particular contest is set forth in this bylaw. Contests, including scrimmages, by separate squads of the same team against different outside teams shall each count as one contest.

17.02.8 Intercollegiate Competition.
Intercollegiate competition [\textit{missing text “is considered to have occurred”}] occurs when a student-athlete in either a two-year or a four-year collegiate institution [\textit{missing text “does any of the following”}]; (Revised: 1/10/95, 1/9/06)
(a) Represents the institution in any contest against outside competition, regardless of how the competition is classified (e.g., scrimmage, exhibition or joint practice session with another institution\textsc{’}s team) or whether the student is enrolled in a minimum full-time program of studies; (Revised: 1/10/91)

17.02.10 Outside Competition.
Outside competition is athletics competition against any other outside athletics team (including an alumni team) that does not represent the intercollegiate athletics program of the same institution. (Revised: 1/12/04)

17.02.11 Outside Team.
An outside team is any team that does not represent the intercollegiate athletics program of the member institution or a team that includes individuals other than eligible student-athletes of the member institution (e.g., members of the coaching staff, ineligible student-athletes, members of the faculty).

D\textsc{ivision III} \textit{underlined text indicates differences from DI manual}

17.02.2 Contest.
A contest is any game, match, exhibition, scrimmage or joint practice session with another institution\textsc{’}s or an outside team, regardless of its formality, in which competition in a sport occurs between an intercollegiate athletics team or individual representing a member institution and any other outside team or individual not representing the intercollegiate athletics program of the same member institution. (Revised: 1/10/91, 1/13/03)

17.02.3 Contest, Countable, Institutional.
A countable contest for a member institution, in those sports for which the limitations are based on the number of contests, is any contest by the member institution against an outside team in that sport, unless a specific exemption for a particular contest is set forth in this bylaw. Contests, including scrimmages or exhibitions, by separate squads of the same team against different outside teams shall each count as one contest. During the traditional segment, countable contest limitations apply separately to multiple teams (e.g., varsity, subvarsity and freshman) of the same sport. During the nontraditional segment, all teams (e.g., varsity, subvarsity and freshman) of the same sport shall be treated as one team for purpose of the countable contest limitations. (Revised: 4/17/12 effective 8/1/12, 1/16/13)

17.02.8 Intercollegiate Competition.
Intercollegiate competition is considered to have occurred when a student-athlete in either a two-year or a four-year collegiate institution does any of the following: (Revised: 1/10/95)
(a) \textit{Competes while representing the institution in any contest against outside competition, regardless of how the competition is classified (e.g., scrimmage, exhibition or joint practice session with another institution\textsc{’}s team) or whether the student is enrolled in a minimum full-time program of studies; (Revised: 1/10/91)

17.02.9 Outside Competition.
Outside competition is athletics competition against any other athletics outside team (including an alumni team) or individual that does not represent the intercollegiate athletics program of the same institution. (Revised: 1/12/02, 1/13/03)

17.02.10 Outside Team.
An outside team is any team that does not represent the intercollegiate athletics program of the [\textit{missing text “member”}] institution or a team that includes individuals other than eligible student-athletes of the [\textit{missing text “member”}] institution (e.g., members of the coaching staff, ineligible student-athletes, members of the faculty).