



MEMORANDUM

July 31, 2019

VIA EMAIL

TO: NCAA Divisions I, II and III Softball Conference Commissioners, Directors of Athletics and Head Coaches.

FROM: Edith Gallagher, Chair
NCAA Softball Rules Committee

Vickie Van Kleeck, Secretary-Rules Editor
NCAA Softball Rules Committee.

SUBJECT: Softball Rules Changes and Experimental Rule Approved.

The NCAA Softball Rules Committee and Playing Rules Oversight Panel approved nine major rules changes for the 2020 and 2021 seasons. One of the major rules changes includes requiring regular season barrel compression testing beginning January 1, 2021 for Division I and January 1, 2022 for Divisions II and III. All of the rules changes may be viewed [here](#).

In addition, the committee and panel approved an experimental rule to be used during conference games (when two conference teams play each other in a conference game), including the conference tournament, during the 2020 season. By December 31, any conference wanting to experiment with video review must submit their request in writing to the NCAA Softball Rules Committee through Vickie Van Kleeck, ncaasbsre@gmail.com, and Ashlee Follis, afollis@ncaa.org. Any Division I, II or III conference may request approval. Any conference granted permission to experiment is required to collect data and submit it to the rules committee by June 3, 2020.

More information outlining the experimental rule and process to follow is below.

If you have questions on any of the new rules changes or the experimental rule, please contact Vickie Van Kleeck at ncaasbsre@gmail.com or 540-813-4655.

EG/VVK:af

Enclosure

cc: Ms. Carol Bruggeman
Ms. Joanna Lane
Division I Conference Softball Administrators
NCAA Softball Rules Committee
NCAA Registered Softball Umpires
Selected NCAA Staff Members

National Collegiate Athletic Association

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The NCAA is an equal opportunity employer that values inclusive excellence in the workplace.

Enclosure – 2020 Experimental Rule

The following experimental rule has been approved for the 2020 season. By December 31, any conference wishing to use the experimental rule must submit the request in writing to the NCAA Softball Rules Committee through Vickie Van Kleeck, softball secretary-rules editor, at ncaasbsre@gmail.com and Ashlee Follis, NCAA, at afollis@ncaa.org.

Any Division I, II or III conference may request approval. Any conference that has been granted permission to use the experimental rule will be required to collect data (as outlined by the rules committee below) and submit it to the rules committee by June 3, 2020, to the email addresses above.

The experimental rule may only be used in conference games (when two conference teams play each other in a conference game), including the conference tournament. The experimental rule may not be used in non-conference games or tournaments hosted by a school using the experimental rule.

In conference games (when two conference teams play each other in a conference game), including the conference tournament, the crew chief may initiate a review of designated plays at his/her discretion beginning with the 6th inning in any game. Additionally, each head coach has two challenges to initiate a review for the entirety of the game, which must be indicated before the next pitch, before the pitcher and all infielders have clearly vacated their normal fielding position and left fair territory, or before the umpires have left the field of play. The following are the plays that shall be subject to review via initiation by the crew chief or via a head coach's challenge:

1. Deciding if a batted ball called fair is fair or foul.
2. Deciding if a batted ball called a ground rule double or home run is fair or foul.
3. Deciding if a batted ball called foul that could result in a ground rule double or home run is fair or foul.
4. Spectator interference.
5. Deciding scoring plays at home plate inclusive of collisions (illegal and/or malicious slides), obstruction by a defensive player or timing plays.
6. Force/Tag Play Calls: Plays involving all runners acquiring the base before the defensive player's attempt to put the runner out at any base.
7. Hit-by-Pitch Calls: Those plays for which there is a possibility that a pitched ball touches a batter or her clothing, which shall incorporate a review on whether the batter is inside or outside the batter's box if it is determined upon review that the ball hit the batter or her clothing.
8. Placement of Runners: An umpire's placement of all runners (per the rules/case book) after any blocked ball call.
9. With runners on base, a no catch can be changed to a catch only if it results in a third out. With no runners on base, a no catch can be changed to a catch at any time.

The following criteria shall be used by conferences using video review:

1. All equipment should be tested by appropriate personnel before each game.
2. A ruling on the field will only be changed if there is indisputable video evidence to reverse the call. Absent that evidence, the original ruling on the field will stand.
3. A review must be verbally or visually indicated before the next pitch, before the pitcher and all infielders have clearly vacated their normal fielding position and left fair territory, or the umpires leave the field of play.
4. The video review may be conducted on-site by the crew chief or by an off-field official at a centralized video review location.
5. If video review is conducted on-site by the crew chief, the video review area shall not require an umpire to walk through spectators or dugouts to view the coverage. At least one umpire must remain on the field.
6. During the video review, the defensive team shall maintain their position on the field and may warm-up if desired. Offensive base runners and the on-deck hitter shall maintain their position. Other personnel shall remain in the dugout. Any defensive or offensive conferences will be charged as during any other part of the game.
7. Once the review is completed, the crew chief will communicate the ruling to both head coaches and the official scorer using the following criteria. This should also be communicated to the broadcasting booth, if applicable, via the umpire who has a microphone.
 - a. Ruling on the field is confirmed;
 - b. Ruling on the field is reversed; or
 - c. Ruling stands due to no indisputable evidence to reverse it.
8. If the reversing of a call results in the need for decisions on the placement of base runners, the crew chief shall use his/her best judgment and/or the appropriate rule to determine where to place the runners as if the call had been made correctly
9. The final decision may not be argued by either coach. A coach who argues the final decision shall be immediately ejected.

Data Collection

If this experimental rule is used, the following data must be collected and reported to the NCAA Softball Rules Committee:

1. Number of reviews in each game and the situation reviewed in each instance;
2. Whether the review was coach or umpire initiated;
3. For each review, whether the call on the field was upheld or overturned;
4. For each review, the length of the review; and
5. The length of each game (from first pitch to last out) and length of regular season TV games (from first pitch to last out) for comparison purposes.