



# BASEBALL 2018

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

## Put Your Heart in the Right Pace

Pace of play remains in the spotlight in collegiate baseball.

The NCAA Baseball Rules Committee approved an experimental rule for 2018 that permits the Southeastern Conference (SEC) to test coach-to-catcher electronic communication in an effort to speed up pitch-calling.

In the 1970s, the average Men's College World Series (CWS) game was done in about two-and-a-half hours. The general trend in CWS game time averages has been upward. In 2017, the average game ran 3 hours and 15 minutes. Many regular season games are running longer, some pushing toward or past the four-hour mark.

On May 9, 2017, Arizona defeated Arizona State, 14-13, in a nine-inning mid-week game that lasted 4 hours and 45 minutes. That game may be on the extreme end, but the overall trend toward longer games has the attention of the leaders in college baseball.

With the length of games trending upward at a time when people's attention spans seem to be shortening, rulemakers expect to explore additional pace of play initiatives.

Randy Bruns, NCAA baseball secretary-rules editor, said he anticipates the rules committee will evaluate the intentional walk without pitches needing to be thrown and elimination of the third-to-first pickoff move — both pace of play changes MLB recently adopted.

"Everything is on the table," Bruns said. "I anticipate that the Division I, II and III baseball committees as well as the Rules Committee will be looking at all of those things as we



**Ryan Bleiberg of Simi Valley, California, monitors time between innings with a stopwatch. Avoiding excess time between innings is one of the ways to help with pace of play.**

head into the rule change year for next year."

Ray Tanner, chair of the NCAA Division I Baseball Committee, said he doesn't want pace of play initiatives to compromise the integrity of the game, but he sees opportunities to make enhancements.

"I personally think the length of games that we're dealing with in college baseball and professional baseball have been extended too long," said Tanner, who is the athletics director at the University of South Carolina, Columbia, and former longtime head coach of the school's baseball team. "While I don't think anybody is interested in a 1:20 game, when you get into 3:40-plus, you're starting to push it. The quality of the experience is diminished."

"I don't think it's a game you can rush, but it's a game that has to have a particular pace that keeps your attention," Tanner said. "And I think we can do some things to make it better."

An idea that's expected to get another look is the play clock. The SEC tested a play clock several years ago, but a lack of widespread support at the time led to the Rules Committee withdrawing a proposal for wider use for the 2016 season. Minor league baseball improved pace of play using a play clock, showing the possibilities and alleviating concerns such a move would damage the game's traditions.

"Minor league baseball has knocked 20-25 minutes off their games with the play clock," said George Drouches, the NCAA National Coordinator of Baseball Umpires. "So, I do believe the play clock may eventually come to college baseball."

Tanner said when it was tried in the SEC, it never became a factor. Everyone knew it was there, and

*See "Pace of Play" p. 15*

# Welcome to the 2018 College Baseball Season

The 2018 Baseball Guide is designed to provide not only information, but also clarifications leading into the season. Umpires, always keep it with

your development materials — for use in your study and pregame discussions. Coaches, please keep it with your game-day materials as a quick reference. In addition, this 2018 NCAA Preseason Guide will be posted on our HOME PLATE page: [www.ncaabaseball.com](http://www.ncaabaseball.com). arbitersports.com. Head coaches, please register as well to have access to NCAA

Baseball's Home Plate.

2018 is a non-rules-change year. Rule interpretations will continue to be issued by Randy Bruns, NCAA Baseball Secretary-Rules Editor, and items that will continue to receive attention include: bat tampering, hit by pitch (HBP), pace of play, instant replay, pitching position and the suspension penalties in order to clarify and educate all to the provisions.

Instant replay became a permissible playing rule in 2017. The centralized location instant replay system and processes, well developed by the Baseball Umpire Program (BUP) — used in the Super Regionals and College World Series — is ever-evolving in its protocol. With this said, instant replay expansion as an experimental rule will take place in 2018 involving the Southeastern Conference — this experimentation and data will give the Baseball Rules Committee an understanding of how the increased number of reviewed plays impacts the pace of the game.

Looking back on initiatives in 2017:

■ We addressed the pitching position rule: Specific guidelines

and instructions for umpires were established, as well as video bulletins addressing the primary directive of the new rule — that the pitcher must clearly declare what pitching position he is in when he is taking his sign.

■ Video Bulletins early and throughout the year focusing on the intentional component of hit-by-pitch (HBP) in addition to video examples — simplified language was installed, “Coach, I am bringing your batter back to bat because in my judgment your batter intentionally tried to get hit by that pitch.”

■ 2017 saw dramatic reductions in violent collisions at home plate due in part to better instruction in this regard, as well as establishing plays at the plate protocol: dirt circle, catcher not in the baseline, act of fielding, obvious attempt to avoid a collision.

## 2018 Points of Emphasis:

The Rules Committee discussed the need to continue to emphasize student-athlete and coach misconduct issues and bat tampering are all serious offenses that will not be tolerated in collegiate baseball.

■ Bat testing prior to play in the 2017 NCAA Division I Baseball Championship was mandated to ensure the integrity of competition and ensure that bats being used have not been altered or tampered with for better performance. Many Division I Conferences have initiated bat testing for the 2018 regular season. Rule 1-12 contains the penalty for use of an illegal bat.

■ The rules committee discussed the importance of maintaining a strong stance on unsportsmanlike behavior and also discussed the potential of increasing the penalty for ejections. The NCAA Baseball Umpire Program will continue to instruct umpires to issue an

official warning to attempt to defuse an escalating situation.

Umpires: Remember, in all situations: Be confident, be credible, be concise, be in control.

Pace-of-play is attracting much attention (see story on page 1): communication devices; visible play clock to accompany current timing rules for between innings and play with no runners on base; limiting the duration of a defensive conference at the mound; and permitting the “no-pitch intentional walk.” Another item the Rules Committee will include on the survey is eliminating the third-to-first pickoff move. Remember, we can improve upon our game’s pace of play: understand and enforce the timing factors — once again, warn, enforce, move-on. Remember, time is not automatically granted to a batter — ONLY for safety reasons or IF a pitcher freezes the hitter too long. Lastly, calling the high strike (strike zone: Rule 7, Section 4, B, A.R. 1) will help much as well.

I would like to thank all who participate in our NCAA Baseball Umpire Program for their selfless passion to service; in addition, much appreciation as well to the conference coordinators for their dedication with collaborative efforts, including but not limited to: branding/marketing of officiating, clinics and educational efforts, evaluation processes, assignment recommendations for NCAA Championships, communication with committees/coaches, dealing with situations during the regular season and NCAA Championships, and recruiting new officials.

■ In closing: Remember... Who you are. Who you represent. Why we do what we do.

Finally, I would like to wish all the stakeholders of our great game of NCAA college baseball the very best in 2018. □



**George Drouches**

**NCAA National Coordinator of Umpires**

# Experimental Rules: Replay and Audio

This coming season, the Southeastern Conference (SEC) will get the opportunity to experiment with expanded video replay and electronic audio communication between coach and catcher. That's a result of two experimental rules cleared by the NCAA Baseball Rules Committee in July 2017 and approved by the NCAA Playing Rules Oversight Panel in August 2017.

Rulemakers follow a two-year cycle for major rule changes, and last year was the rule-change year for baseball. But it's not uncommon for some changes to emerge during the off-year. In addition to the two experimental rules involving the SEC, rulemakers approved requiring the barrels of bats be a contrasting color to the color of the baseball starting in 2020 and bat barrel compression testing (starting in 2020 in Division I and in 2021 in Division II and Division III).

## Expansion of Video Review

Under the experimental replay rule, the SEC will be allowed expanded use of video replay review for their conference games and SEC tournament games; it will not be permitted during non-conference games or in the NCAA championships.

In addition to the plays currently reviewable under the rules, the SEC will be allowed to review:

■ **Force/tag plays** — Plays involving the batter-runner or other runner acquiring the base prior to the defensive player's attempt to put them out at any base.

■ **Runners passing** — Calls involving whether a runner passes a preceding runner before such runner

is out; determining whether a runner scored ahead of a third out; and, upon appropriate appeal by the defensive team, whether a runner touched a base.

■ **Hit by pitch** — Whether a pitched ball touches a batter or his clothing.

■ **Base retouches** — Deciding if a runner failed to retouch his base after a fair or foul ball is legally caught before the runner or the base is tagged by the fielder.

■ **Runner placement** — An umpire's placement of the batter-runner or runners following a boundary call.

■ **Interference** — Deciding if interference occurred in an attempt to break up a double play.

The experimental rules also permit coaches to challenge two calls.

The umpire crew chief, at his or her discretion, may still initiate a video review for reviewable plays.

The SEC will provide the Baseball Rules Committee with data on the number and duration of replay reviews. That information will help the committee assess the impact on the pace of the game.

## Coach-to-Catcher Communication System

The other experimental rule approved for the SEC directly aims at improving pace of play. The SEC will be allowed to use electronic audio devices for communication between a coach and the catcher.

The SEC will report back to the Baseball Rules Committee on whether the direct communication reduces the time consumed by the pitch-calling process. That process can be slow as teams relay pitch information to the catcher, often in the form of a numerical code. Then, the catcher looks at a wristband to decipher what pitch is being called. Finally, the catcher signals to the pitcher.

The experimental rule only allows communication between one coach and the catcher, and like the experimental video review rules, only permits their use in 2018 SEC regular season games and the 2018 SEC tournament games. It will not be permitted during non-conference games or in the NCAA championships.

## Bat Barrel Compression Testing

One rule change that will take effect in the future involves bat testing. As a result of concerns over bat tampering in recent years, bat barrel compression testing will be required in Division I starting in 2020 and in Division II and Division III starting in 2021.

## Bat Color Requirement

Starting with the 2020 season, the barrel of the bat must be a contrasting color to the color of the baseball from 18 inches above the knob to the end cap. The Baseball Rules Committee felt that with the increase in baseball bat designs and graphics using white as the predominant color, batted balls were becoming more difficult for defensive players to react to in the field. □

## Acknowledgments

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# 2017-18 Rule Change Review

Here is a review of the rule changes from last season, including several that are points of emphasis for 2018.

## Plate Collisions (8-7)

To reduce collisions at the plate, the Rules Committee rewrote the collision rule.

A runner while attempting to score may not deviate from his direct pathway to the plate in order to initiate contact with the catcher (or other player covering home plate), or otherwise initiate an avoidable collision. If the umpire judges that a runner initiated contact, the umpire shall declare the runner out.

In such circumstances, the ball is dead, and all other baserunners shall return to the last base touched at the time of the collision. If the runner slides into the plate in an appropriate manner and contact occurs, the umpire will let play continue with no penalty.

A runner who lowers his shoulder, or pushes through with his hands, elbows or arms in an effort to touch the plate, would be in violation of Collision Rule 8-7.

On a feet-first slide, a runner's buttocks and legs should hit the ground before any contact with the catcher. In the case of a head-first slide, a runner shall be deemed to have slid appropriately if his body hits the ground before any contact with the catcher. If a catcher blocks the pathway of the runner, the umpire shall not find that the runner initiated an avoidable collision in violation of the Collision Rule.

Additionally, in order to block the plate, the catcher must have possession of the ball. If the catcher doesn't have possession of the ball and blocks the pathway of the runner, the umpire shall call the runner safe. But, if the catcher blocks the pathway of the runner in a legitimate attempt to field a throw — even if the throw is bad and pulls him into the pathway of the runner — he is not considered blocking the plate.



The NCAA rule changes for 2017-18 included one aimed at reducing collisions at home plate.

## Obstruction by the Catcher (2-55)

The Rules Committee added a note involving obstruction by the catcher: "The catcher, without the ball in his possession, has no right to block the pathway of the runner attempting to score. The baseline belongs to the runner and the catcher should be there only when he is fielding the ball or when he already has the ball in his hand. If a fielder is about to receive a thrown ball and if the ball is in flight toward and near enough to the fielder so he must occupy his position to receive the ball, he may be considered 'in the act of fielding' a ball. It is entirely up to the judgment of the umpire as to whether the fielder is in the act of fielding a ball."

## Official Warning (2-57)

To improve communication between umpires and coaches (PlayPic A), a new term was added: "Official Warning." An Official Warning is a warning from an umpire that carries the words, "This is your official warning. If you continue, you will leave me no option but to eject

you." Saying, "Knock it off," "That's enough," "Don't say anything else," or, "I've heard enough," doesn't constitute an official warning.

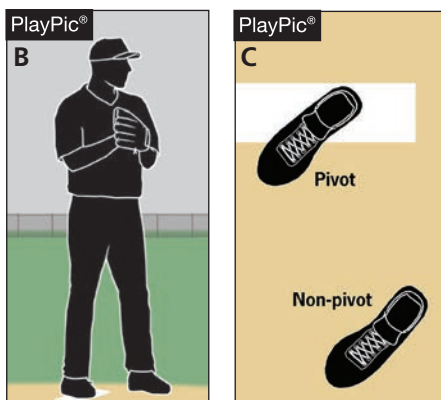


## Coaches (2-26-g; 3-2-Note)

The Rules Committee added a new penalty for a substitute head coach who is ejected. When the head coach has been ejected and is replaced by a substitute head coach, the substitute head coach has all the duties, rights and responsibilities accorded to the original head coach. However, should the substitute head coach be ejected, he shall serve a one-game suspension in addition to the ejection.

## Windup Position (9-1-a)

The new rule requires the pitcher to stand with his chest and shoulders generally facing the batter, with the pivot foot on or in front of and touching the pitchers' plate with the other foot free (PlayPics B and C). The added language requires the pitcher to face the batter with the chest and shoulders, giving the base runners and umpires a clear determination if the pitcher is in the windup or set position.



## Appendix E

With technology playing a bigger role in the game of baseball, the Rules Committee added language to reflect the protocols for "Getting the Call Right."

**Call Changes:** If a call is to be changed after a crew conference without the use of video replay, the umpire shall notify the opposing head coach of the umpire's decision to change the call before signaling the decision to the press box or crowd. Once the notification is made to the coach, the calling umpire will signal

the final decision. This provides the coach an explanation prior to an announcement after the umpires finished a conference or used replay review. The committee believes that will reduce the potential for additional arguments by coaches of the impacted team.

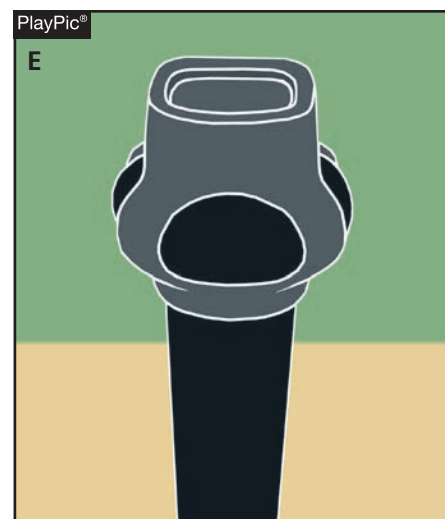
**Catch/No Catch Review:** Under previous rules, a catch/no-catch decision in the infield could not be reviewed with replay; now that play is reviewable. Only under the following situations may an umpire change a no catch to a catch: if there are runner(s) on base and the catch becomes the third out of the inning; or, any time with a batter-runner only.

**Video Replay:** Replay may be used during regular-season play. In order to change a call, there has to be indisputable video evidence and the replay must occur before the next pitch or play. Additionally, there are no coaches' challenges. The crew chief will make the determination to use replay. If a call is being reversed, the crew chief shall use his best judgment to determine where the batter-runner and runner(s) will be placed and the final decision may not be argued. Scoring plays at home plate have been recently added to the rule.

## Pivot Foot (9-2-l)

New language to the pitching rule states, "A pitcher shall not jump or push forward off the pitcher's plate with his pivot foot and then bring his

foot to the ground and make a second push-off to deliver the pitch." That is an illegal pitch and shall be called a balk with runners on base (PlayPic D).



## Bat Tampering (1-12-c, d and Pen.)

Tampering with bats has become a serious concern in collegiate baseball. The Rules Committee added new language in this area: "There shall be no external attachment(s) to any part of the bat and no data collection or transmission device externally attached or embedded within any part of the baseball bat." (PlayPic E) Also, coaches and players will not be allowed to roll the bat surface to give the bat extra pop for when the ball hits the bat. The penalty for tampering with the bat has changed

See "Review" p. 6





## Review

*Continued from p. 5*

as well. If an illegal bat is discovered, the batter shall be called out and the bat shall be removed from the game.

### Use of Bullpen (2-13)

During the game, potential substitute pitchers and other players must use the bullpen areas that are designated on the playing field to warm up. They may not use another facility or location out of sight and sound of the playing field. Particularly during inclement weather, there is a concern that home teams have an unfair advantage with alternate facilities that are not available to the visiting team.

### Fielder, Runner Tangle (2-55-Note-5)

In case of a wild throw during a steal attempt, if the ball is misplayed by the fielder and if the runner and fielder get tangled up, the fielder is restricted from any further hindrance after the initial contact. This clarifies that the initial entanglement of the runner and fielder is not obstruction, but any hinderance after the initial entanglement would constitute obstruction.

### Alternate Baseball (4-1-Note)

Umpires will be the sole judge on whether the ball should be checked and should do so if the ball has bounced off equipment or the external parts of the ballpark, such as the fence, wall, dugouts and other equipment. The rules committee recommends that umpires check the ball if it appears to be “discolored, scuffed or otherwise unsuitable for play,” or if the pitcher requests a different ball. It is not necessary to check the ball that is not cleanly caught by the catcher or hits the dirt.

### Hit by the Pitch (8-2-d-1)

The rules committee amended the wording of the rule to read: “A batter may not make a movement to inten-



**A batter may not make a movement to intentionally get hit by the pitch and must avoid getting hit whenever possible.**

tionally get hit by the pitch and must avoid being hit whenever possible.” This is intended to reduce the number of batters allowing themselves to be intentionally hit or moving into pitches.

### Advancement of Runners (5-8-d-Note)

The rules committee added the following: “When the winning run is scored in the last half-inning of a regulation game, or in the last half-inning of an extra inning, as the result of a base on balls, hit batter or any other play with the bases full which forces the batter and all other runners to advance without liability of being put out, the umpire shall not declare the game ended until the runner forced to advance from third has touched home plate and the batter-runner has touched first base. An exception will be made if fans rush onto the field and physically prevent the runner from touching home plate or the batter-runner from touching first base. In such cases, the umpires shall award the runner the necessary bases with no appeal allowed.”

### Ground Rules (4-5)

New rules language clarifies that ground rules shall not conflict with playing rules. “A ground rule may be adopted where unusual conditions prevail if agreeable with the visiting team. No ground rule shall conflict with the official playing rules. If both teams don’t agree, ground rules shall be determined by the umpires.”

### Halted Game (5-9-c)

If both teams agree to use the halted game procedure prior to the start of a non-conference contest and the contest cannot be finished, the unfinished game becomes a “no contest” if the game has not met the conditions of a regulation game.

### Catch and Carry (6-1-d; 6-4-e)

If a fielder legally catches a ball in live territory and steps or falls into out-of-play territory, the ball is dead and each runner, other than the batter, will advance one base without the liability to be put out.

### Distracting Tattoos (9-2-h)

If a pitcher has tattoos that the batter or umpire considers distracting, the pitcher must legally cover the tattoos.

### Momentary Adjustment (9-3-h-Note)

A pitcher may momentarily adjust the ball in the glove and separate the hands so long as it is prior to taking a legal pitching position.

### Permissible Warmup (9-4-a-8)

During a free trip or a timeout to substitute a pitcher, a defensive player may warm up another defensive player, provided it doesn’t delay the game. The player warming up must be in the current lineup and remain in fair territory during the charged conference or timeout.

### Permissible Gloves (1-13-c)

Every player, with the exception of the catcher, will be allowed to use a glove not more than 13 inches long and eight inches wide. □

# NCAA Misconduct Penalties

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

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

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

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

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

# Test Yourself

In each of the following, you are given a question or play situation and several possible answers. You are to decide which answer(s) is/are correct using the 2017-18 NCAA rules.

1. Which of the following result in a dead ball?
  - a. A thrown ball hits loose equipment near a dugout.
  - b. A fielder tosses his glove at a thrown ball but misses it.
  - c. A thrown ball hits an umpire in fair territory.
  - d. A thrown ball hits an umpire in foul territory.
  - e. A thrown ball hits a runner.
  - f. None of the above.

2. F1's first pitch to B1 is in the dirt and hits the front edge of the plate. B1 checks his swing and the ball bounces up and glances off the bat into the air. F2 catches the ball before it hits the ground.
  - a. Foul tip; strike one.
  - b. B1 is out.
  - c. B1 is out only if it's the third strike.
  - d. Ball one.

3. With R1 on first, R3 on third and one out, R1 is stealing when B1 grounds to the shortstop. F6 throws home and retires R3. F2 sees R1 headed for third; the play at third is close but R1 is out. BU then announces F4 obstructed R1 between first and second.
  - a. R1 is awarded home.
  - b. R1 is awarded third.
  - c. R1 is returned to second.
  - d. The out on R1 is canceled.
  - e. The play stands because the obstruction had no effect on the play.

4. With R2 on second and no one out, F5 plays in, expecting a bunt. B1 swings away and the ball deflects off F5's glove, remains in the air, and floats toward third where F6 is coming to cover the bag. Just as F6 is about to grab the ball, it hits R2 and drops to the ground without being caught. Both R2 and B1 are safe. The umpire



What's the call when, on a dropped-third strike that rebounds off the catcher's gear, the batter kicks the ball? Question 19 deals with such a scenario. Jon Campbell, Milton, Washington.

judges that R2 did not deliberately interfere with the batted ball.

- a. The ball remains live.
- b. The ball is immediately dead.
- c. Only B1 is out.
- d. Only R2 is out.
- e. Both B1 and R2 are out.
- f. The play stands.

5. Which of the following are foul balls?

- a. A batted ball strikes the pitcher's plate and rebounds off of B1, who is still in the batter's box.
- b. A batted ball strikes a runner in fair territory and then goes to foul ground.
- c. A batted ball comes to rest on top of the plate.
- d. A batted ball strikes third base and goes to dead-ball territory.
- e. A sharp line drive strikes the pitching plate and then rebounds to foul ground between first and home.
- f. None of the above.

6. With R1 on first and R3 on third and no one out, F1 has come to a stop when R1 starts running toward second. F1 turns and throws to second base.

- a. A balk should be called, with both runners being awarded one base.
- b. A pitcher may throw to an unoccupied base if it is an attempt to retire a runner.
- c. The pitcher must step back legally

from the pitcher's plate before he may throw to second.

7. With R1 on first and R3 on third and two outs, R1 is off with the pitch. B1 hits a line drive to right. R1 touches and rounds second, realizes the ball may be caught, retouches second, and starts back to first. F9 fields the ball on one hop and throws to second. Meanwhile R3, who held at third, takes off for home as soon as he sees the ball hit the ground. F6 takes the throw and tags second just before R1 slides into the bag.

- a. R1 is out.
- b. R1 is safe.
- c. The run counts if R3 scores before the out at second.
- d. The run counts.
- e. The run is canceled.

8. With R1 on first, F1 from the set position changes direction, but does not come to a complete and discernible stop.

- a. F1 has balked.
- b. R1 is awarded second.
- c. A ball is awarded to the batter.
- d. There is no violation.

9. With R1 on first, B1 bunts down the first-base line. The ball rolls foul and is about to stop when B1 kicks it in disgust. The plate umpire is certain it would not have rolled fair.



- a. Foul ball.
- b. B1 is out.
- c. R1 is out.
- d. B1 is ejected.

**10.** With no runners on base, the pitch is outside to left-handed B1 who swings and carries the barrel of the bat past his body, stopping his swing with the barrel about six inches behind the front edge of the plate.

- a. A ball should be called.
- b. A strike should be called.
- c. The umpire should judge if the swing carried the barrel of the bat past the batter's front hip.

**11.** B1 hits the ball down the right-field line and F9 throws his glove at the ball, but does not touch it. B1 trips over first and does not advance any farther.

- a. B1 is awarded third.
- b. B1 is awarded second.
- c. The play stands.
- d. F9 is ejected.

**12.** With R2 on second, the catcher tries to return the ball to the pitcher after a pitch, but F2 bumps the plate umpire and the ball sails over F1's head. R2 breaks for third but is thrown out on a close play.

- a. R2 is returned to second.
- b. The out stands.

**13.** With R2 on second, F1 momentarily stops during his delivery and then immediately continues. B1 lines a single scoring R2. A balk is called.

- a. The ball is immediately dead.
- b. The ball is delayed dead.
- c. R2 is allowed to score and B1 remains on first.
- d. R2 is awarded third and B1 must return to bat.
- e. The offensive team may choose between c and d.

**14.** With no runners on base, B1 hits a high fly to short center. The wind-blown ball eludes F8 as B1 pulls into second. B1 rounds second, feints to third and is on his way back to second, when F8 fires the ball over F5's head into the dugout. B1 is awarded:

- a. Second (the base he was approaching).
- b. Third.
- c. Home.

**15.** Which of the following are balks with a runner on base?

- a. Before coming to the stop in the set position, the pitcher slowly moves his shoulders to eye a runner at first.
- b. After coming to the stop in the set position, the pitcher slowly moves his shoulders to eye a runner at first.
- c. The pitcher attempts a pick-off move from the wind-up position.
- d. The pitcher jump-turns on the pitcher's plate without gaining ground with his free foot and attempts a pick-off at first.
- e. None of the above.
- f. All of the above.

**16.** With R1 on first and R3 on third and one out, the suicide squeeze is called and both runners break with the pitch. B1's bunt, a pop-up down the first-base line, is caught by F2, who then fires to first to double-up R1. R3 crosses the plate before the thrown ball arrives at first.

- a. The run counts.
- b. The run is canceled.
- c. The run is canceled only on appeal.

**17.** Which of the following are true?

- a. The DH may bat only for the pitcher.
- b. The DH is never allowed to play defense.
- c. If the DH is batting for the pitcher, the pitcher may pinch hit for another defensive player.
- d. The pitcher may pinch run, but only for the DH.
- e. If the DH plays defense, the pitcher must leave the game.

**18.** R3 is on third. F5 holds the ball to attempt the hidden-ball trick. The catcher, not realizing what is going on, is granted time by the plate umpire. After the conference at the mound ends, the pitcher stands immediately behind the pitcher's plate as if in a pitching position but F5 still has the ball.

- a. A balk is called.
- b. A balk is called if and when F1 touches the pitcher's plate.
- c. F5 should be told to give the ball back to F1.
- d. A balk is called when the plate umpire puts the ball in play.
- e. The base umpire can tell the plate umpire not to make the ball live because F1 does not have the ball.

**19.** With no runners on base and one out, B1 with a 1-2 count swings and misses at a low pitch. The ball bounces off the dirt, hits the catcher's chest protector and rolls down the first-base line. In his haste to get to first, B1 accidentally kicks the ball into the dugout.

- a. B1 is awarded first.
- b. B1 is awarded first only if the umpire judges he would have made it safely had the ball not gone into the dugout.
- c. B1 is out.
- d. B1 is out only if the umpire judges the kick was intentional

#### Answers

1. f — 6-1, 6-2, 6-3, 6-4
2. b — 7-11-c
3. b, d — 8-3-e-2
4. a, f — 6-1-c
5. a, e — 2-35, 7-7
6. b — 9-3-c
7. a, e — 2-33, 8-5-J-Note-3
8. a, b — 9-1-b
9. a — 7-11-o
10. b, c — 2-39
11. c — 8-3-g
12. a — 6-3-a
13. b, c — 9-3-Penalty-1
14. c — 8-3-o-3
15. b, d — 9-3, 9-3-c-5
16. a, c — 5-6-c, 8-6-a-1
17. a, d — 5-5-d, 7-2
18. c, e — 6-6
19. a, d — 7-11-h-Note, 8-3-k

# Q&A with Secretary-Rules Editor



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## How did implementation of last year's rule changes go?

Once we got through the preseason, things actually went very well. We got the most initial questions on the clarifying of pitching positions, and really we were just asking people to follow what was already written. If you compare the rule from the year before, the only thing that was changed was a couple words were added to the definition of windup to make it consistent with how the definition of the set was worded. We added "chest and shoulder generally facing the batter" for the windup. That was changed because over the last several years, we have gotten lax in allowing the pitchers to pretty much do whatever they wanted. When there's nobody on base, those things are not very problematic. But as soon as you get a runner on third base, and the runner can't tell whether the pitcher is going to be in the windup or the set, it makes a huge difference.

## Were you expecting questions about a particular rule change?

I anticipated a few more questions on the catch-and-carry rule. Especially at the Division II and III levels, and even at some Division I stadiums, there are sometimes lines that delineate an out-of-play area. Before, the ground rules on how to handle those things were all over the place. The catch-and-carry rule was designed to keep everybody in play and make it consistent from place to place.

## The official warning didn't lead to decreased ejections. Did the tool not have the intended impact?

It did have some impact in some situations. The overall guideline was designed to give the umpires a tool hopefully to give people who were getting a little excited about a play or a decision to take a breath and calm down and stay in the game without reaching a point where an ejection was necessary. The major concern was that for a collegiate-level sport, there were just way too many ejections. One of the things that we're fighting is our culture, the baseball culture. The number of reports that have been received with the obscene language, the misbehavior of coaches or players that were leading to ejections, was just not acceptable for a college sport. We don't have a 15-yard penalty like football does. We don't have a technical foul like basketball does. So when there's something that goes on that a coach wants to address, it should be done in a much more civil fashion, but there again our baseball culture has allowed a timeout for a coach to go onto the field and argue a play that's based strictly on umpire judgment. Then of course because there was not that immediate penalty, and if they wanted to make a point or fire up their troops, that's what happened in baseball. We were hoping and we did a lot of training at the clinics to make sure the

umpires were staying calm and using the proper language and not being too aggressive or adding fuel to the fire. ... We were hoping for a reduction in the number of incidents which necessitated an ejection. Unfortunately, that didn't really happen. We're going to give this one more year. If these things don't work to reduce these numbers, then we have no other choice than to make the penalties more severe in all cases. Some of the language would make a sailor blush, and that's just not acceptable at the college level. Anytime you're trying to make a change in a culture, it's very difficult.

## What rule do you get asked most about for clarification?

Collisions. Those kinds of plays come up frequently. Plays at the plate — when can the fielder block the baseline? What does the runner have to do? When do they have to slide? When do they have to avoid? Those are hard judgments and we've tried to give some guidelines, but no matter what you do, there's going to be judgment involved and there's always going to be some controversy. The Rules Committee will take another look next year to see if there's further clarification needed.

Hit by pitch is another one. Last year, we didn't change the rule, but we cleaned up the language to make it clearer what we're expecting. But for the plate umpire, when the ball is sailing in, that's a difficult judgment when everything is coming at you and the catcher is in front of you. But we have seen a lot of improvement. We still have players who are trying to "steal first base" and intentionally get in the way of a pitch. Those are much easier to see on television and replay than when the ball is coming at you at 90 miles per hour when you're the plate umpire. Those are plays that require a lot of judgment, but we're making a lot of good progress. □

# Ejections Up Despite Official Warnings

Reducing the number of ejections and suspensions in college baseball has been a focus in recent years. Last year saw the introduction of the “official warning,” which was aimed at providing a way for umpires to more clearly indicate when a line was about to be crossed in the hopes of allowing a coach to avoid the ejection.

Unfortunately, the data from 2017 doesn’t reflect a decrease in ejections.

“Well, it’s not getting any better,” said George Drouches, NCAA national coordinator of umpires. “As a matter of fact, ejections are up, suspensions are up, the profanity is deplorable.”

At the Division I level, ejections of head coaches increased from 141 in 2016 to 152 in 2017. In fact, since 2012, when the Rules Committee first made major changes — including adding a penalty chart (see page 7) — to support umpires and emphasize that unsporting conduct directed at the umpires by players and coaches wouldn’t be tolerated, the number of ejections has increased in each successive year.

In his role as national coordinator, Drouches has the opportunity to read every ejection report from all three divisions. His biggest concern is when profanity is directed at another person, such as a coach coming out and saying, “You,” followed by an expletive. “That’s not very healthy,” Drouches said.

Randy Bruns, NCAA baseball secretary-rules editor, agreed. “Some of the language would make a sailor blush,” Bruns said.

In 2017, the national coordinator of umpires received 709 NCAA ejection reports (693 in 2016 and 658 in 2015). These included 303 Division I reports (up from 264 in 2016). Of this list, 152 were head coaches, 37 were assistant coaches and 114 were student-athletes.

A brief categorizing of the causes for the Division I ejections included ball/strike, safe/out, and



**For the sake of the game, coaches and umpires need to establish and maintain a professional relationship.** Tony Norris, Anaheim, California.

fair/foul — with ball/strike as the main cause, at nearly 70 percent of reported ejections. All ejections are technically unsportsmanlike, with directed profanity reported at over 90 percent as the cause.

Umpires need to continue to be diligent with the official warning, Drouches said. Umpires should deploy words that clearly outline a warning is being given: “This is your official warning. If you continue, you will leave me no option but to eject you.” Saying, “Knock it off,” or “That’s enough,” or “I’ve heard enough,” doesn’t constitute an official warning. After giving an official warning, the umpire will write on the back of the lineup card when the official warning occurred. That should include the person being warned, the inning and the situation that constituted the warning.

Drouches said it’s a two-way street. “Umpires have to be accountable to not throw coaches out on a whim,” Drouches said. “We have structure, we have protocol.”

Umpires must learn to be calm and collected professionals — working as a calming influence to defuse situations rather than engaging in any conduct that could be misinterpreted as “baiting” or using any inappropriate language themselves. Additionally, umpires need to know the suspension rules because their serious nature leaves no room for mistakes in application.

Ultimately, coaches and umpires need to work together to build a professional relationship that benefits the overall game of college baseball.

If the situation doesn’t change, rulemakers may consider adding a one-game suspension to the head coach, similar to what is in place for players and other team personnel.

“We need a collaborative effort to look at the two areas that are potentially tainting our game: one is the pace of play and the second is the behavior,” Drouches said. “I’m hopeful that 2018 will be a year where we can all be better at this, so maybe we won’t have to put that suspension in there. But a lot of that’s up to the behavior of the individuals out there.” □

## 2017 NCAA Ejection/Suspension Reports

Division I		
Player	114	
Assistant Coach	37	
Head Coach	152	
	<b>Total: 303</b>	<b>43%</b>
Division II		
Player	99	
Assistant Coach	23	
Head Coach	84	
	<b>Total: 206</b>	<b>29%</b>
Division III		
Player	83	
Assistant Coach	30	
Head Coach	87	
	<b>Total: 200</b>	<b>28%</b>
	<b>Grand Total: 709</b>	<b>100%</b>



# A Good Call: Keeping Fit

Staying in shape is both the bane and boon of baseball umpires everywhere.

The thought of getting up an hour earlier or staying up an hour later to get that good workout in during the off-season can make a grouch out of the most optimistic arbiter, especially when the urge to sleep a little more is so strong.



Dr. Douglas J. Ramos

But according to College World Series tournament physician and team physician for Creighton University, Dr. Douglas J. Ramos — as well as to a telling recent online

conversation of active umpires — there is wide consensus that attention to physical and mental health is a requirement if umpires want to have successful seasons and long careers.

“Moving forward, I think everyone (in officiating) realizes that they have to pay attention to their mental and physical health,” Ramos said. “It really affects the performance. They need to do it because the stresses of the job can be huge, especially with officials who have day jobs and families. Performance can really be affected by health and sleep and nutrition.”

It can be a relatively simple process to address, added Ramos, but does require a bit of discipline.

His off-season suggestions include cardio exercises for about 30 minutes, five times a week; flexibility exercises, 20 minutes a day, five days a week; strength work two-three times a week for about 20 minutes a session, and also some balance work.

If that is too regimented, he suggests doing either 150 minutes of moderate exercise per week or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise, whatever works best.

A good resource website is [mayoclinic.com/health/fitness/MY00396](http://mayoclinic.com/health/fitness/MY00396).

Ramos also strongly suggests that each umpire get a preseason physical from their primary physician plus some lab work, especially for those who might be a little overweight or have a history of conditions such as diabetes.

“It’s always good to touch base with your doctor. Be proactive,” he said. “Get that baseline knowledge because most umpires are beyond their own playing days (age-wise).”

As for the umpires themselves, they have as many ideas for off-season workouts as there are games in a season. Mixing and matching that helps prevent boredom and provides motivation was the common thought shared in an online forum.

One swore by yoga, another runs three times a week, another uses a treadmill.

A group moderator uses a combination of running and stretching and gets others in his group involved to provide inspiration.

Another uses an elliptical bike and those intervals that Ramos suggested.

Others fall back on the tried and true idea of a good walk but combined with things like a tread climber plus light weightlifting.

Many repetitions of light squats (60-80 pounds) were found to be useful by one umpire (“I want strong legs for the season,” he said).

Plus, others found resistance and anaerobic training useful.

Some swore by certain fitness websites including [nerdfitness.com](http://nerdfitness.com) and [officiallyfit.net](http://officiallyfit.net).

It’s all a matter of motivation.

“Just do it,” said one on the online thread.

As a matter of personal safety, said Ramos, always consult your physician before engaging in a new serious workout plan.

Then, as the season goes along, notable items to pay attention to include the following:

- Getting enough sleep (Ramos suggests seven to eight hours each night).

- Trying to eat a healthy diet (that includes packing along healthy snacks when you know you won’t have time for a good meal).

- Hydration (lots of water, especially before and during a game on a hot day).

- Stretching (this was a repeated mantra on the umpire health thread).

- Using sunblock.

Ramos knows regular workouts during the season on a busy schedule are almost impossible, so he suggests doing some quick exercising during the day. His suggestions include doing repeated intervals of hard, intense exercising for 10-20 seconds at a time, with a minute break between each repetition, for about 10 minutes at a time.

“There are some studies out there that suggest that you can get some good cardio benefit by doing that,” Ramos said.

And most importantly, don’t neglect your mental health.

“I know it’s hard sometimes, but try to find about 10 minutes before (a game) and about 10 minutes after so you can just sit and be quiet,” Ramos said. “You have to find moments for that mind-body quiet time.”

In short, anything that can help you stay feeling fit and ready to go will help in all aspects of your life.

“No, it can’t (help you call balls and strikes), but it can elongate your career, and make you feel better,” said one umpire on the thread.

“You owe it to yourself and your family, and for your well-being, long after your days on the field (are over),” added Ramos. □

# Illegal Bats

What does the rule say?

Rule 2-42 defines an illegal bat as: "A bat that does not display the BBCOR certification mark, or in the umpire's judgment or upon appeal of the opposing team, has been altered so as to affect the distance factor, or cause an unusual reaction on the baseball. This includes ... metal bats that are flat-surfaced or have had the polyurethane core removed or altered."

The batter steps into the box with an illegal bat and it is detected before the first pitch is thrown — what now?

The batter shall be declared out and the bat is removed from the game (1-12). This part of the penalty applies if the batter steps into the batter's box, the plate umpire checks the bat and finds it to be illegal.

## What if the illegal bat is detected after the first pitch?

After the first pitch — whether the pitch is legal or illegal — the batter shall be declared out. Any baserunner advances as a result of the batted ball are nullified. The bat is removed from the contest.

## What if the bat becomes illegal because of contact during that time at-bat?

Perhaps the ball hit directly on the end cap and it cracked. If so, the bat is simply removed from play. The batter is not out. That is not the same as the batter using a bat that was illegal prior to his time at bat.

## Does a scratch or dent make it illegal?

Possibly. A small scratch in the paint is not cause for a bat to be removed, but if the barrel of the bat is cracked, that could alter the performance of the bat and it has become illegal. Or, if the bat has become flattened due to use or dented

See "Illegal Bats" p. 14

## 2017 NCAA Championship Umpires

### Division I

**Danny Collins**  
West Hartford, CT

**Adam Dowdy**  
Chandler, AZ

**Troy Fullwood**  
Smithfield, VA

**Jeff Head**  
Hoover, AL

**Heath Jones**  
Torrance, CA

**Steve Mattingly**  
Peoria, AZ

**Greg Street**  
Wendell, NC

**Mark Uyl**  
DeWitt, MI

**Mark Winters**  
Springfield, IL

### Division II

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Claremont, CA

**Patrick Griffin**  
Hennessey, OK

**John Lavin**  
Port Orange, FL

**Jeff Linkowski**  
Pittsburgh, PA

**Steve Linton**  
Bay City, MI

**Paul McColgan**  
Egg Harbor City, NJ

**Kevin Raine**  
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**Josh Reep**  
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### Division III

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**Shane Cannon**  
Winthrop Harbor, IL

**Rudy Firmbach**  
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**Matt McMahon**  
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**Thomas Newport**  
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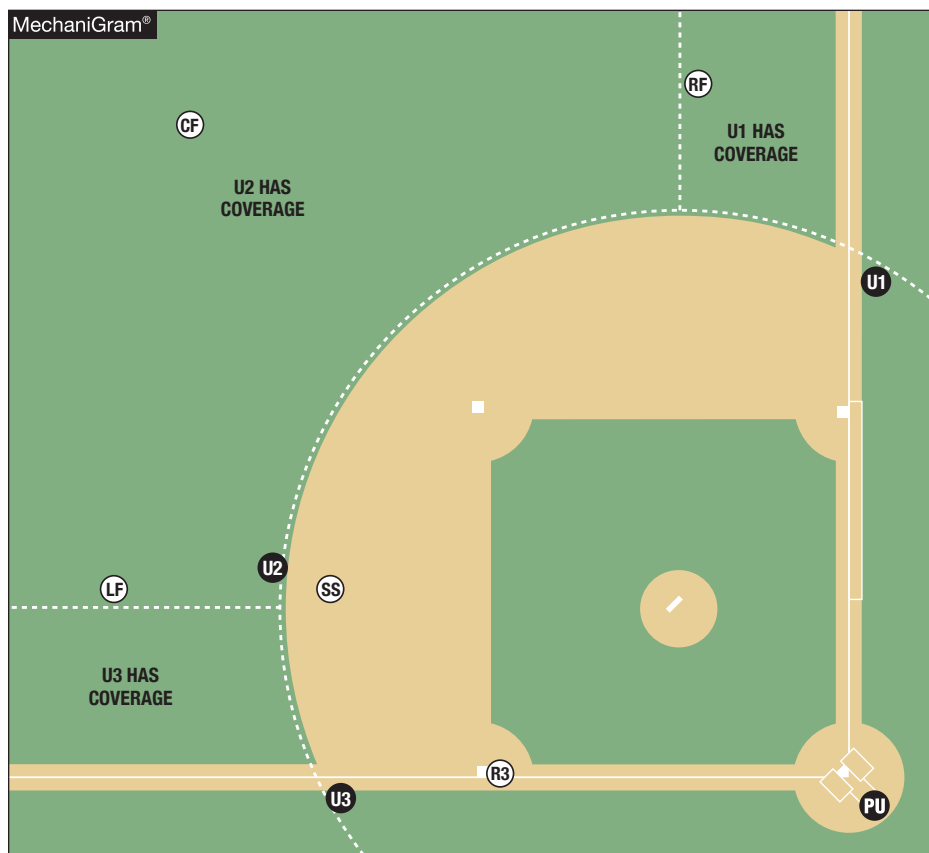
# Changes on the Fly: New Mechanics

Starting in the 2018 season, fly-ball coverage has changed under the Collegiate Commissioners Association (CCA) mechanics for a four-umpire crew.

When U2 is inside the diamond, U2 will take routine catch/no-catch decisions in the outfield, unless U1 or U3 goes out. U2 is generally the closest umpire to a routine outfield catch and, more importantly, is in front of the fielder and has the best view of a catch and transfer. U2 can easily step onto the dirt area and make the call; U2 will be more visible than U3 or U1, who are still on their respective baselines.

Additionally, with less than two outs and a runner on third base, U2 will now go out on any trouble ball that takes the left fielder straight forward, straight back or to his left all the way over to the right fielder who goes to his right (as shown in the MechaniGram).

The only trouble ball in the outfield that U2 will *not* go out on is when the left fielder goes to his right (toward the foul line) or the right fielder going straight forward, straight back or toward the right-field line. U2 will be the “quarterback” when reading fly balls in these situations.



Anytime a ball is hit in a gray area, U2 will dictate coverage by either going out or coming into the infield.

Additionally, there were minor changes to mechanics during fly

balls to the outfield with a runner on third. See the 2018 CCA Baseball Umpires Manual for further details of mechanics changes. □

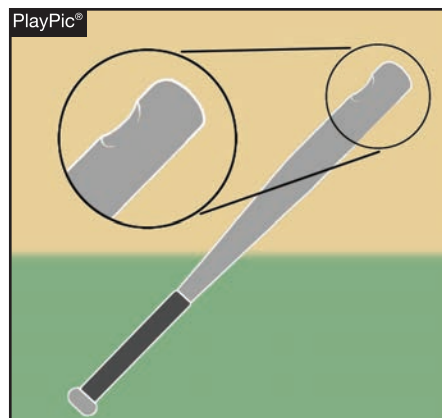
## Illegal Bats

*Continued from p. 13*

(as shown in the PlayPic), it is now illegal to use as this can cause an unusual reaction on the baseball.

### Can normal usage result in an altered bat?

Yes. If you hear a rattling sound when the bat is swung, something is broken inside the barrel and the bat has become illegal through use.



### What if there's pine tar or another foreign substance beyond the 18-inch mark?

The presence of a foreign substance, such as pine tar, beyond the 18-inch mark does not make a bat illegal. Same thing if the bat does not have an identification mark 18 inches from the end or if the handle has become loose. In those cases, the bat should be removed from the game, but the batter is not out. □

SOURCE: NCAA BASEBALL INTERPRETATION APRIL 25, 2017



# Obstruction on Pickoff Plays

If a throw pulls a fielder into the path of a runner, is it obstruction?

The obstruction rules give some leeway to a defensive player “in the act of fielding the ball,” which includes a thrown ball “in flight and directly toward and near enough to the fielder so he must occupy his position to receive the throw” (2-55-Note-1).

On a pickoff play, however, the rules outline a higher standard on the fielder. The defensive player “must clearly have possession of the ball before blocking the base with any part of the defensive player’s body” (2-55-Note-4).

A new approved ruling provides clarity on what constitutes a pickoff play: “A pickoff occurs when a pitcher or catcher throws to a base between pitches in an attempt to retire a runner who is either leading off or about to begin stealing the next base, or to keep a runner close to the base.”

If a defensive player without the ball impedes the runner on a pickoff play, the umpire will call, “That’s obstruction,” and then signal and call, “Time.” The ball is dead immediately and the runner being played on is awarded one base beyond the last base he had attained before the obstruction.

The additional rulebook language became necessary because of questions about what exactly constituted a pickoff. A definition of pickoff didn’t exist in the college rules — it sort of was left as “we recognize it when we see it,” said Randy Bruns, NCAA baseball secretary-rules editor.

It was pretty clear that when a pitcher threw to a base to try and retire a runner with a lead off, that was a pickoff play. But what about when a catcher, immediately after receiving a pitch, fires the ball down to first base to catch a runner off the base?

“No one really knew because there wasn’t a definition in the book,” Bruns said. □



Rob Hansen, Corona, California, observes a pickoff at first base.

## Pace of Play

*Continued from p. 1*

players didn’t put themselves in a position to have a ball or strike called because of delays.

While future initiatives to improve pace of play seem imminent, there are things umpires, coaches and players can do right now to improve the game’s pace of play.

Tanner said that when coaches know they’re going to the mound to make a change, they don’t need to wait until after the conversation with the pitcher.

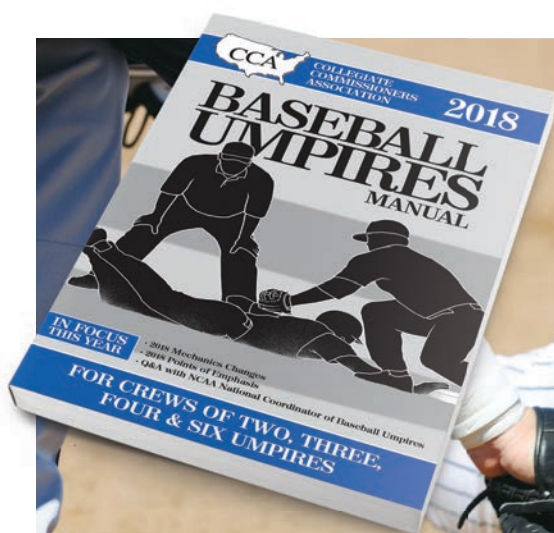
And existing rules should be followed and enforced:

- With no one on base, pitchers have 20 seconds to deliver a pitch.
- Batters should be kept in the batter’s box unless otherwise allowed to leave.

■ Time limits between innings should be enforced.

Drouches said umpires have tools at their disposal.

“But a lot of the issue is that the game is micromanaged by coaches now,” Drouches said. “When you look at college baseball, they call a pitch, they call a defense, the catcher has got to get the sign, steps back out of his crouch, the batter comes out of the batter’s box and we start all over. And in our games in postseason, we’re averaging well over three hours a game. And that’s going to be the detriment — that’s the Achilles’ heel of all this stuff. Everything is very positive, but when you look at the length of time these games take, it’s drawing a little bit of a negative to college baseball. So pace of play is a main priority for the future.” □



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