

Technical Bulletin

Subject: Playing Rule Changes From The 2017 WBSC-SD Rules Congress. TB 2017-03

Date: 1st November 2017

At the 2017 WBSC-SC Congress Playing Rules Commission 28 proposed rule changes were submitted. Of these 28, 4 were withdrawn and 5 were amended resulting in 24 proposals being passed.

Of the 24 approved proposals, 11 were for housekeeping, simply rewording the rule to help with the interpretation of the rule without affecting the intent of the rule.

The approved changes affecting the way we play are in the table below.

Detail relating to the 2013 - 2017 Softball Australia Rule Book changes are on following pages, changes are in bold italic.

Softball Australia will continue to use the 2013 – 2017 rule book in conjunction with this Technical bulletin for the 2018 Australian Championship season until further notice.

Following a review of the changes, Softball Australia has directed that all the new rules are to apply to Australian Championships from the date of this Bulletin

<p>APPEALS – Appeals to be made before <i>All defensive players have left fair territory on their way to the bench or dugout area.</i> <i>Remove words The pitcher</i> as there is no need to specifically mention the pitcher.</p>
<p>BENCH AREA - There shall be no smoking, consumption of alcohol or chewing tobacco in this area. Note: Smoking includes the inhalation of tobacco products, e cigarettes and vaping</p>
<p>ILLEGAL GLOVE – The runner is not out when a fielder makes a play on a batter-runner while using an illegal glove. An illegal glove does not meet specifications of a legal glove or the use of mitt by a fielder other than the catcher or 1B person</p>
<p>STRIKE ZONE - The Strike Zone is any part of the ball over any part of home plate with the complete ball between the bottom of the batter’s sternum (chest plate) and the bottom of the batter’s knee cap, when they assume their natural batting stance. The natural batting stance is the stance the batter takes after the release of the pitch when deciding to swing or not swing at the pitch. When any part of a legally pitched ball enters the strike zone before touching the ground and at which the batter does not swing; provided the top of that ball is at or below the bottom of the sternum and the bottom of the ball is at or above the bottom of the knee cap. Notes: <i>The purpose of this rule change is not to have less strikes called, it is designed to get a consistent zone called internationally and at elite competitions</i> <i>This rule complements the zone that is currently called at most elite competitions around the world.</i> <i>It is widely accepted in non-elite competitions the top of the zone is generally below the arm pits.</i> <i>Additionally, the lower part of the zone has not changed, the wording only clarifies the bottom of the zone better.</i></p>
<p>UNIFORM - Delete “Caps are mandatory for male coaches”</p>
<p>PITCHING - The Pitcher must have both feet on the ground within the 61.0cm (24 in) length of the pitcher's plate. The pitcher shall take a position with their pivot foot in contact with the pitcher’s plate and their non-pivot foot in contact with or behind the pitcher’s plate. The non-pivot foot may be placed on or behind the pitching plate before the beginning of the pause/stop and remain stationary during the pause where all following movements must be forward.</p>

Rule 1 Section 2b - APPEAL PLAY - Change

A live or dead ball appeal is a play or situation on which an umpire cannot make a decision unless requested by a manager, coach or player of the non-offending team
If made by a fielder, the fielder must be in the infield when making the appeal. The appeal may not be made after any one of the following has occurred:

- a. A legal pitch has been thrown or an illegal pitch has been called
- b. All defensive players have left fair territory on their way to the bench or dugout area.**

Reasoning: Removed the word Pitcher, to have consistency in the wording of appeal rules. No need to specifically mention the pitcher

Rule 1 Sec 27 - DUGOUT - Add

There shall be no smoking, **consumption of alcohol or chewing tobacco** in this area.
Note: Smoking includes the inhalation of tobacco products, e cigarettes and vaping.

Rule 1 Sec 46d – ILLEGAL RE-ENTRY - Change

d. The starting DP (FP ONLY) or his substitute **is entered into** the batting order in a position other than **the DP's** original starting position

Reasoning: Removed word "placed" Use of similar wording throughout the rules.

Rule 1 Section 44 - ILLEGAL GLOVE - addition

An illegal glove does not meet specifications of a legal glove **or the use of mitt by a fielder other than the catcher or first base person"**

Reasoning: The rules needed a definition to a fielder other than a first base player or catcher making a play using a mitt.

Rule 1 Sec 56 - INFIELD FLY - Change

Remove the NOTE

Reasoning: Rule 1 Sec 56 is a definition; the notes can be moved to Rule 8 and Rule 10.

Rule 1 Sec 60 - INTERFERENCE – Add

Interference is the act of

d. A spectator who **enters or** reaches into the playing field and impedes a fielder playing the ball, or makes contact the ball that a fielder is attempting a play on

Reasoning: Add 'who enters' as greater clarification is needed to cover an incident besides that written

Rule 1 Section 93 – STRIKE ZONE - New

Any part of the ball over any part of home plate with the complete ball between the bottom of the batter's sternum (chest plate) and the bottom of the batter's knee cap, when they assume their natural batting stance. (MP Only – The space over home plate between the batter's armpits and the top of the knees when they assume their natural batting stance.) The natural batting stance is the stance the batter takes after the release of the pitch when deciding to swing or not swing at the pitch.

Reasoning: This rule complements the zone that is currently called at most elite competitions around the world. However it is widely accepted in non-elite competitions and modified pitch the top of the zone is generally below the arm pits. Additionally, the lower part of the zone has not changed, the wording only clarifies the bottom of the zone better, the width of the zone remains the same, any part of the ball on any part of the plate. The purpose of this rule change is not to have less strikes called, it is designed to get a consistent zone called internationally at elite competitions.

Rule 3 Section 8c – UNIFORM - Change

Female slowpitch players in single-sex competition may wear all shorts or all long pants. Female slowpitch players in coed competition may wear all shorts or all long pants, regardless of the male players' pants style.

Reasoning: Recognising that many coed slowpitch teams consist of male players who generally wear long pants and female players who may play softball in either long or short pants in single sex play, having the female players free to choose their own style in Coed allows flexibility without requiring them to maintain two sets of uniform.

Rule 3 Section 3 - THE OFFICIAL SOFTBALL - Add

Female Slowpitch players may play with the 11" ball with COR of .520 or under and a Ball Compression of 300 or under.

Reasoning: To take advantage of recent developments in ball technology aimed at safer play.

Rule 4 Sec 7a - RE-ENTRY - Exception - Delete Exception and Note

a. Any of the starting players, may be substituted and re-enter once, provided such players occupy the same batting position whenever they are in the line-up.

~~**EXCEPTION: If the starting player (currently not in the line-up) is brought into the line-up as a Replacement Player.**~~

~~**NOTE: The original player and the substitute(s) cannot be in the line-up at the same time.**~~

Reasoning: R1 Sec 87 & R1 Sec 51, does not allow the starting player still eligible to re-enter to be used as a replacement player. Rule 7 Sec 7a Exception needs deleting as it suggests that they can be used.

Rule 4 Sec 12b - DUGOUT CONDUCT - Add

There shall be no smoking, **consumption of alcohol or chewing tobacco** in this area.

Note: Smoking includes the inhalation of tobacco products, e cigarettes and vaping.

Rule 6 Section 1c PITCHING – Change.

Sec. 1 PRELIMINARIES

- a. May not take the pitching position, on or near the pitcher's plate, without having the ball in his possession.
- b. Shall not be considered in the pitching position unless the catcher is in position to receive the pitch.
- c. Must have both feet on the ground within the 61.0cm (24 inch) length of the pitcher's plate. The hips shall be in line with first and third bases and **the pivot foot** must be in contact with the pitcher's plate.
- d. The pitcher shall take a position with their **pivot foot** in contact with the pitcher's plate and their **non-pivot foot in contact with or behind the pitcher's plate** and with the ball in either the glove or the pitching hand, take the signal, or appear to be taking a signal, from the catcher with the hands separated.
- e. Must, after taking the signal, bring his whole body to a full and complete stop.....

Sec. 3 LEGAL DELIVERY

g. **The Pivot foot** must remain in contact with the pitcher's plate before the start of the pitch. **The non-pivot foot may be placed on or behind the pitching plate before the beginning of the pause/stop and must remain stationary during the pause.**

h. The pivot foot must remain in contact with the pitcher's plate at all times before the forward drag, leap or hop.

i. In the act of delivering the ball, the pitcher may take one step with the non-pivot (stepping) foot simultaneous with the release of the ball. The step must be forward toward the batter and within the 61.0cm (24 inch) length of the pitcher's plate. **The non-pivot foot can only move forward with the start of the pitch. (Any backward movement of the non-pivot foot during or after the pause is an illegal action).**

NOTE to Sec 3i:

It is not a step if the pitcher slides either foot across the pitcher's plate, provided contact is maintained with the plate and there is no **movement backwards of the non-pivot (stepping) foot**. Lifting the pivot foot off the pitcher's plate and returning it to the plate, creating a rocking motion, is an illegal act.

j. The pivot foot must remain in contact with the pitcher's plate, or push off and drag away from the pitcher's plate, or be airborne prior to the non-pivot (stepping) foot touching the ground.

k. The pitcher may leap from the pitcher's plate, land, and with a continuous motion, deliver the ball to the plate. The pivot foot may push off and/or follow through with his continuous action. This is NOT considered a Crow Hop.

Rule 7 Section 4a - A STRIKE IS CALLED BY THE UMPIRE - Change Amend

When any part of a legally pitched ball enters the strike zone before touching the ground and at which the batter does not swing; provided the **top of that ball is at or below the bottom of the sternum and the bottom of the ball is at or above the bottom of the knee cap.**

Rule 8 Section 2e - THE BATTER-RUNNER IS OUT - Note - Change

NOTES from Rule 1 Sec 56:

1. When it is apparent that a batted ball will be an infield fly, the umpire shall immediately declare, "INFIELD FLY, IF FAIR - THE BATTER IS OUT," for the benefit of the runners.
2. The ball is alive and runners may advance at the risk of the ball being caught, or retouch and advance after the ball is touched, the same as on any fly ball. If a declared infield fly becomes a foul ball, it is treated the same as any foul.
3. If a declared infield fly is allowed to fall untouched to the ground and bounces foul before passing first, or third base, it is a foul ball.
4. If a declared infield fly falls untouched to the ground outside the baseline and bounces fair before passing first, or third base, it is an infield fly.

Reasoning: These notes were moved from the definitions to within the rules

Rule 8 Section 9e THE RUNNER IS OUT - EFFECT - Sec 9g-j:1 - Change

1. Appeals may be made while the ball is alive or dead, but the defensive team loses the privilege of making an appeal **after any one of the following has occurred:**
 - a. **A legal pitch has been thrown or an illegal pitch has been called.**
 - b. **All defensive players have left fair territory on their way to the bench or dugout area. If a fielder makes the appeal, the fielder must be in the infield when making the appeal; and/or**
 - c. **The umpires have left the field of play following the last play of the game.**

Reasoning: Using the same wording throughout the rules avoids confusion.

Rule 8 Sec 9m - THE RUNNER IS OUT - Change

When he interferes with a fielder attempting to field a fair-batted ball, regardless of whether the ball has first been touched by **a fielder**, including the pitcher, **or interferes with a fielder throwing a ball**, or intentionally interferes with a thrown ball.

Reasoning: It could be a fielder trying to make a play. Word 'another' not needed and add, or with a fielder while throwing a ball.

Rule 10 Sec 11 (5) - INFIELD FLY - Add

Determine and call an Infield Fly. **When it seems apparent that a batted ball will be an infield fly, the umpire shall immediately declare, "INFIELD FLY, IF FAIR-THE BATTER IS OUT," for the benefit of the runners.**

Reasoning: More appropriate to place what the umpire does here than Rule 1 Sec 56.

Rule 11 Section 2c - PROTESTS THAT WILL BE RECEIVED - Change

Delete current rule and replace with new Note 1

Protests for the above a-c must be **made before any of the following has occurred:**

- a. **A legal pitch has been thrown or an illegal pitch has been called; or**
- b. **All defensive players have left fair territory on their way to the bench or dugout area; and/or**
- c. **The umpires have left the field of play following the last play of the game.**

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