Umpires May Conference for Catch/No Catch Decisions

An expansion of the “Getting the Call Right” principle was approved by the NCAA Baseball Rules Committee during its annual meeting. Umpires will now be allowed to conduct a conference to change a call of “catch” to “no catch” and a call of “no catch” to “catch.”

The committee approved the change in an effort to modernize the game, and to get an incorrect call changed to what should have been the correct call.

Under the new rule, if a play to the outfield originally is called a catch but is overturned by umpire conference or through video evidence, the play will be declared dead and the batter will be placed at first base. Each runner will be advanced one base from the position occupied at the time of the pitch.

If the play is overturned in foul territory, it will be ruled a foul ball and all runners will return to the base they occupied at the time of the pitch.

On plays to the outfield that are overturned from “no catch” to “catch,” all action prior to the ball being declared dead will be disallowed. The batter will be declared out and all runners returned to the base they occupied at the time of the pitch.

In a related move, the committee also approved expansion of the experimental video instant replay rule for conference regular season and tournament games currently to allow the umpires to conference and reverse a call of “catch” to “no catch” or change a call of “no catch” to “catch.” Conferences may request through the rules committee to use the experimental video instant replay rule.

The experimental video instant replay rule currently limits reviewable plays. Replay may be used to decide if an apparent home run is fair or foul; deciding whether a batted ball left the playing field for a home run or stayed in play within the field; deciding if spectator interference occurred (only on plays involving home run balls); and deciding if a batted ball is fair or foul (only for specific batted balls outlined in the Getting the Call Right procedures). □
Welcome to the 2015 Baseball Season

As we begin the 2015 season, the material in this baseball guide is designed to provide not only information, but clarifications leading into the season. Umpires, I encourage you to keep your development materials for use in pregame discussions. Coaches, you may want to keep it with your game day materials as a quick reference as well.

As I came on board this past fall, I called across all divisions many coaches, umpires and commissioners as well as the Division I coordinators and regional advisors and asked their thoughts on a variety of subjects. Here are just a few shared consensus comments:

- **Enforce the rules as written.** Incidentally, at our Baseball Umpire Program coordinator meeting last June, three glaring inconsistencies were mentioned. The 90-second rule, the batter’s box rule and the legal pitching positions.

- **Umpires**, you know the steps — the protocol with warnings, then enforcement. Coaches, if your pitcher is asked to comply with facing the batter, free foot, pivot foot with the windup, I am certain your pitcher will adjust accordingly.

- **Batter’s interference.** The rule needs to be enforced consistently. Do not let batters get away with obvious and not-so-obvious tactics.

- **Conference to discuss catch/no catch.** Umpires may conference and change a call and place runners accordingly. This leads to another topic of discussion: everyone needs to understand that umpires should not get help, when the rules do not allow for it, just to appease a coach. Umpires are not arrogant or unapproachable; they are simply following policy.

- **Wellness.** Many of our top umpires are reaching the time in their lives when they need to be more cognizant of their health and fitness. Start the season in the best possible shape.

- **Ejections.** Treat each other with respect. After reading a large number of ejection/suspension reports, I am hopeful that the number will be significantly lower in 2015. (See Penalty Chart elsewhere in this guide for increased penalties). Proper communication and timely use of a warning may prevent the ejection. I want to be very clear here: Umpires need to inform the ejected head coach, ‘You have been ejected. If you continue to argue, you will be subject to a two-game suspension for prolonged arguing.” (Ejections for players and assistant coaches carry automatic one-game suspensions. Postgame ejections result in a two-game suspension.)

- **Arbitersports.com:** The focus is the return on investment. ArbiterSports was designed to improve the consistency of officiating. The plan is to have a more engaging Home Plate page with more development videos.

Coaches, I ask that you please send in plays from your games. In addition, we tentatively plan to have semi-weekly articles by coordinators, advisors and umpires and a more diverse wellness section as well. Frankly, the site is untapped. It’s a perfect place to improve consistency. We all have a stake in this and we should take advantage of technology. It’s just waiting for us.

I believe regional advisor Mark Ditsworth said it best when he was asked to comment on the challenge ahead. He said, “it’s a new era in college baseball with more umpire accountability.”

“Do you have the right character?” he asked. “Self-evaluate: Be honest. You must have an extreme level of commitment. That includes finding time to stay physically fit and mentally prepared. Do you have the mobility?”

We’re looking for improvement. That means staying up with all the changes in college baseball, knowing how players play and coaches coach.

Are you getting better or content with what you are doing? Umpiring is becoming much better. Are you continue to improve? Be courageous, proud and professional. Be willing to work to perfection. Can you improve on your social skills and deal with all involved? Umpiring is personality. Can you be a leader and not a controller?

See “Drouches” p. 5
To more conveniently list all ejection categories and their associated penalties, the NCAA Baseball Rules Committee has adopted a penalty chart that will appear in the rule book. The chart has categories with penalties based on the act and the offending participant.

The chart (see p. 4) is one of several revisions or additions to rules regarding ejections and the resultant penalties. Approved Rulings 5 through 9 in Rule 2-26 have been revised and now read as follows:

**Rule 2-26, A.R. 5:** Whenever a pitcher is ejected for disputing an umpire’s decision or for unsportsmanlike conduct toward an umpire, while serving as the current game pitcher, after having been removed from the game that is still in progress or the game has concluded and the ejection is post-participation, the suspension will be for a total of four games. If a pitcher is removed as the pitcher but remains in the game in another capacity, the ejection is for that game plus applicable suspensions.

**Rule 2-26, A.R. 6:** When an assistant coach, a player (other than a pitcher) or team personnel, other than the head coach, is ejected for disputing an umpire’s decision or for unsportsmanlike conduct or language directed at an opponent or an umpire (including a post-participation ejection), he will receive a one-game suspension in addition to the present game ejection. Assistant coaches and players may not leave their position on the field or dugout area to appeal any play on the field. Head coaches are ultimately responsible for their team’s actions on the field. Although there is a difference between a discussion and an argument, participants, other than the head coach, shall not be the ones to represent their team in communication with the umpire(s).

**Rule 2-26, A.R. 7:** No team personnel may continue to argue or to continue to excessively express themselves with prolonged actions or offensive language after an ejection.

**Rule 2-26, A.R. 8:** When applying the suspension rule, penalties shall be served during the team’s next previously scheduled and completed contest(s). If a previously scheduled game has been postponed or halted, that make-up game against the originally scheduled opponent shall count as a regularly scheduled contest. Games may not be added after the incident in order to fulfill the requirements of this rule.

**Rule 2-26, A.R. 9:** If serving multiple suspensions (from a fight or for any penalty) would cause a school difficulty in fielding a team for its next game or games, the institution may request that the suspensions be staggered by its conference office. If the team is an independent, the secretary-rules editor may be contacted for this purpose.

---

Mark Chapman, LaPlace, Louisiana, tries to convince a coach it’s time to leave the field after a discussion. If the coach were to be ejected in this situation, he is subject to discipline spelled out in a new penalty chart approved by the NCAA. Other modifications to penalties following ejections have also been instituted for 2015.

---

### NCAA 2014 Ejection/Suspension Reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division I</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Player</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Coach</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Coach</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting Head Coach</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Manager</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>280</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>45%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division II</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Player</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Coach</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Coach</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>179</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>29%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division III</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Player</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Coach</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Coach</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting Head Coach</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>157</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>25%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>616</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# NCAA Misconduct Penalties

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

**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.
Drouches
Continued from p. 2

I would like to thank all who participate in our Baseball Umpire Program. I also want to thank the NCAA Staff, including our Division II national coordinator, Dan Weikle. Don Umland was also recently selected as the Division III national coordinator. Thanks to Tom Hiler, our director of umpire training, as well as all of the conference coordinators and regional advisors for their passion and commitment to high-quality umpiring.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not formally thank Gene McArtor. Gene not only improved the objectivity of the postseason selection process, but he also improved the decorum between umpires and coaches. Thanks Gene for your selfless service to college baseball these past six years.

Thanks also to Jim Paronto, recipient of the ABCA Meritorious Service Award. That simply speaks for itself. Jim’s unprecedented 12-year term as NCAA baseball secretary-rules editor ends at the end of this season.

College baseball is at a whole different level. The umpiring overall is much better because umpires are willing to work harder to improve their avocation, but there is still room for improvement. College baseball is in a place where television, media, instant replay, K-zone and multiple camera angles are commonplace. Our responsibilities are growing each day, each season, every call and every pitch. Are you ready to meet the challenge?

Best wishes for a fabulous 2015 season. Take care of business and enjoy this great game.

– George Drouches
NCAA National Coordinator of Baseball Umpires

New Definition: Abandonment

To assist umpires in defining and interpreting what actions should be considered as abandonment, a definition for that act will appear in the rule book starting in 2015.

According to Rule 2-1, abandonment is the act of any runner who leaves the base path after reaching first base, heading for his dugout or for his defensive position believing there is no further play. The runner may be declared out if the umpire judges the act of the runner to be considered abandoning his efforts to run the bases. Even though an out is called, the ball remains in play in regards to any other runner.

Play: Less than two outs, score tied, last inning, runner on first. The batter hits the ball out of the park for the winning run. The runner on first touches second and, believing the home run automatically wins the game, cuts across the diamond and heads toward his bench as the batter touches all the bases. Ruling: The base runner would be called out for “abandoning his effort to touch the next base.” The batter-runner is permitted to continue around the bases to make his home run valid.

Even though an out is called, the ball remains in play in regard to any other runner.

A runner will be called out for abandonment if, believing he is called out on a tag at first or third base, starts for the dugout and progresses a reasonable distance still indicating by his actions that he is out.

Changes Address Runners

Two rule changes and an editorial change that appear in the 2014-15 NCAA baseball rule book are aimed at base runners.

To clarify that no runner shall advance on an interference play, the NCAA Baseball Rules Committee has added a sixth Approved Ruling to Rule 2-51, A.R. 6. According to the ruling, no preceding or succeeding runner shall advance on an interference play and a runner is considered to occupy a base until he legally has attained the next succeeding base.

An Approved Ruling for Rule 7-11p, A.R. 1 clarifies that if no defensive player is covering or attempting to cover the base, the defense should not be considered as “making a play.” If the batter-runner is running illegally to first base and his being outside the lane alters the throw of a fielder, hinders or alters a fielder’s opportunity to field the throw, or the batter-runner is hit by the throw that has been made in an attempt to make a play, it shall be called interference and the batter-runner is to be called out.

The editorial change to Rule 2-33 regarding a force play notes that on a dropped third strike, when the batter is not entitled to run to first base, any advancing runner must be tagged to be declared out. That is not a force play as the batter-runner did not advance to first base.

Play 1: With a runner on first, B2 bunts down the first-base line. B1 is running 30 feet outside the runner’s lane when F2’s throw (a) over B2 is over the head of F4, who is covering first base, and goes into right field, (b) hits B2 in the back, or (c) goes into right field because no one is covering the base. Ruling 1: In (a) and (b),

See “Runners” p. 6
Runners

Continued from p. 5

the ball is dead and runner’s lane interference is called. R1 returns to first base. In (c) the ball remains live and play continues. There cannot be interference with no one covering the base.

Play 2: There are runners on first and second, one out and a 2-2 count on B3. B3 swings at a pitch in the dirt but the pitch gets by F2. B3, R1, and R2 all attempt to advance. F2 throws to F5, who (a) tags R2 at third out, or (b) does not tag R2 but touches third base before R2 gets to third. Ruling 2: The ball remains live. In both cases, B3 is declared out because first base was occupied with less than two outs on a dropped third strike. In (a), R2 is out on the tag for the third out of the inning. In (b), R2 is safe because that is not a force play. Runners will be on second and third with two outs.

Foul Pole Must be Yellow

To aid umpires, the NCAA has altered Rule 1-2b to indicate that the foul pole must be painted fluorescent yellow. The rule applies for new construction or for the repainting of existing foul poles.

Any existing foul poles that do not conform must be repainted prior to the beginning of the 2016 season. The requirement applies only to college baseball facilities owned by NCAA member institutions.

Flashback: 2013-14 Rule Changes

Here is a review of rule changes from the 2013-14 seasons.

Changing foul to fair (Appendix E)
A ball that has been called foul can be reversed to fair under limited circumstances under a change to the “Getting the call right” procedures.

For the umpires to consider overturning a foul call, the ball must have first touched the ground beyond first or third base and beyond the first or third baseman.

If the call is changed to fair, the crew chief will place any runners using a conservative philosophy to where runners and the batter would have advanced if the original call had been fair. That situation was also added to the list of reviewable plays for instant replay in the College World Series.

Another addition to that appendix now requires the head coach who is requesting an umpire conference to return to his dugout or coaching box before the umpires convene. The procedure was in effect for the past several years, but was not listed in the rule book.

Pitching mounds (1-5c, 4-3e, 9-1d)
It is legal to use a portable mound if both teams agree before the visiting team arrives at the game site. Also, each bullpen must have a minimum of two mounds with pitching rubbers, plates and regulation measurements.

Coaching boxes (1-3c)
It is now mandatory that the coaching boxes be lined. Previously, that was not a requirement.

Illegal bat penalty (1-12b)
The penalty for an illegal bat was clarified. Any bat that has been flattened or altered to improve performance is an illegal bat. If discovered prior to the first pitch the bat will be removed and the batter must use a legal bat. If discovered after the first pitch the batter shall be declared out. Baserunners shall not advance as a result of a batted ball.

Pitcher’s glove color (1-13c AR2)
The pitcher’s glove can be any color or colors other than white or gray, exclusive of piping. The glove and laces may also be distracting in any way in the judgment of the umpire.

The rule regarding pitcher’s gloves has changed several times over the past few years, but that change should make the rule less confusing and easier to administer for umpires than previous rules.

Catch (2-16)
To improve consistency on what does and does not complete a catch, an approved ruling was added. Only two circumstances may be interpreted as creating a voluntary and intentional release: when the momentum of the catch is complete (the fielder has reversed his direction and is running the ball back toward the infield) or when the fielder is reaching for the ball to make a throw.

Tag (2-76)
An approved ruling was added to the definition of a tag. The new ruling confirms that a ball stuck in a fielder’s glove remains live and that the ball/glove combination may be thrown to a base or used to complete a tag to retire a runner.
Pitching substitutions (9-4f)

To prevent unnecessary delays and avoid confusion for the offensive team, a new rule was added about a pitcher who goes to the mound to start an inning. If the pitcher crosses the foul line on the way to the mound, he must pitch to the first batter until the batter is retired or reaches base. Exceptions are made for illness or injury, or if there is a pinch hitter who enters the game to lead off the inning.

Substitution notification (5-5g)

Either the head coach or another coach in uniform must approve or confirm substitutions when they are made. For substitutes who enter a game without notification, the umpire should receive confirmation of the change from the head coach before recording and announcing the substitute.

Line-Up Card (4-4)

Names on the line-up card are what’s official. Numbers are a courtesy and should be corrected when discovered but there is no penalty for incorrect numbers.

Game-ending policies (5-8g, 5-9c)

Two changes were made in the rules that govern games ending early. Travel policies are now permitted for conference games on the last day of a series, regardless of the method of travel. Previously, a conference could only put a time limit on a game if it was due to commercial air travel.

For non-conference games, both teams can agree to a travel policy before the game.

An approved ruling to the halted game rule clarifies that a game that is started under that rule must be finished in order to count. If two teams are unable to complete a halted game, it becomes “no contest.”

Successive offensive conferences (6-5f)

While a team is limited to one defensive conference per inning without making a pitching change, there is no such rule governing offensive conferences. A team may use any or all of its three offensive conferences in a regulation game at any time without penalty, including consecutively.

Catcher’s throw (7-11f)

A batter’s actions must be intentional in order to be penalized when he is leaving the batter’s box legally and he interferes with the catcher’s throw.

If the batter’s actions are intentional, the batter is out and runners return to the bases at the time of the pitch.

If the catcher’s return throw hits the batter or bat and the batter did not intentionally interfere, the ball is live if the batter is in the batter’s box and dead with runners returning if the batter is legally out of the batter’s box.

Batter deflecting ball (7-11o)

After hitting or bunting a ball that is foul and the batter-runner intentionally deflects the course of the ball while running to first base, the batter is out only if the ball had a chance to become fair.

Running lane interference (7-11p)

The running lane interference penalty was expanded to include that if the batter-runner is outside the running lane and alters the throw or interferes with the catch of the thrown ball or is hit by the throw, the batter-runner shall be called out.

An exception to that penalty is clarified by the batter-runner being permitted to exit the running lane on his last step, stride, reach or slide in an effort to tag the base if he has been running legally to that point.

No objecting to warnings (9-2g)

When an umpire has ruled that a warning needs to be issued because a pitcher has intentionally thrown at a batter, no team personnel may come on to the field to object to such warning. Anyone who does so is subject to warning followed by an immediate ejection.

Base Coaches’ Position Spelled Out

Rule 1-3c covers the base coaches. At the time of the pitch, the base coach may not be closer to the foul line than the inside edge of the coaches’ box and no closer to home plate than the front edge of the box. The shaded area in the MechaniGram illustrates the restricted area.

Base coaches may take a position directly outside of the coaches’ box in the direction of the outfield.

Play: With B2 up to bat and at the time of the pitch, the assistant coach coaching first base stands (a) one foot in the coaches box and his other foot inside the foul line and the coaches box, (b) both feet are outside the coaches box up closer towards the foul line in foul territory.

Ruling: In (a) and (b), warning is issued to the assistant coach and if he continues, the result will be an ejection from the game.
Batter Must Try to Avoid Pitch

What previously appeared in the rule book as a guideline has become a rule. Under new language in Rule 8-2d, A.R. (1), a batter must attempt to avoid being hit by the pitch.

References to the batter “freezing” have been removed from the rule. The new language simplifies previously provided guidance on how umpires should interpret and officiate the hit-by-pitch rule. It also aims to improve safety.

If the ball is outside the strike zone when it touches the batter who has not tried to avoid the pitch, the ball is dead, it shall be called a ball and the batter is not awarded first base.

If the ball is inside the strike zone when it touches the batter who has not tried to avoid the pitch, the ball is dead, it shall be called a strike and the batter is not awarded first base.

**Play:** B1 is in the batter’s box when a pitch is thrown. B1 (a) sticks his elbow out so he is hit by the pitch, (b) stands still and is hit by the pitch, or (c) moves in such a way that he is able to avoid the pitch. **Ruling:** in all situations the ball will be dead immediately (a) If the pitch was out of the strike zone, a ball is added to B1’s count. If the pitch was in the strike zone, a strike is added to B1’s count. In (b), its in the umpire judgment if the batter attempted to avoid being hit by the pitch. If yes, then B1 gets first base. If no, and the ball is in the strike zone a strike will be added to B1’s count. If the ball is out of the strike zone, a ball will be added to B1’s count. In (c), B1 takes his base.

Editorial Changes Approved

In addition to rule changes, the new rule book will reflect editorial changes. The editorial changes follow. New or edited text appears in italics.

**Regulation Game 5-8e**

Another factor — the catcher’s position on the field — is to be considered part of the “time limit” for determining when the defense can lodge an appeal at the end of a game. It is a regulation game when the umpires leave the field of play. If, however, there is be an appeal situation, it is the responsibility of the defense to make the appeal to an umpire before the pitcher and all infielders have left fair territory on their way to the dugout, and the catcher has cleared the dirt circle.

**Play 1:** In the bottom of the ninth inning of a tied game, R2 is on second. B4 hits a single to left field. F7 throws to F5, who catches the ball and throws to F2, but R2 is ruled safe. F6 realizes R2 missed third base and tells F2 to throw to third base for an appeal. At the time, (a) all infielders except F2 in the dirt circle and F6 are in foul territory heading to the dugout, or (b) all infielders are in foul territory, except for F6 and F2 not in the dirt circle. The plate umpire is leaving the field and the base umpire is in fair territory. **Ruling 1:** In (a) the appeal is valid, the run is disallowed and the game continues into the 10th inning. In (b) the appeal is not upheld because F2 has cleared the dirt circle. The game is over.

**Game Misconduct 5-15a-(1) through (3)**

An additional prohibited act and a penalty were added to the rule regarding game misconduct. No player, coach or team may incite or attempt to incite, by word, sign or actions that dispute an umpire’s decision and potentially incite a demonstration by spectators. The offender shall
Use of Video Cameras Clarified

The NCAA Baseball Rules Committee adopted rules language that clarifies how video cameras may be used.

Rule 5-2f indicates that the use of manned video cameras is restricted to the area behind home plate, which is defined as the area from the outfield cutout behind first base to the outfield cutout behind third base. The word “manned” was added to the rule this year.

Filming from beyond the designated area toward the outfield or any point beyond the outfield fence or wall is not permitted, except for television cameras for the broadcast of a game, including Internet broadcasts and video boards.

In an addendum to A.R. 1, the committee noted that video for scouting, training or teaching purposes may be recorded from any unmanned camera location. However, no video from manned or unmanned sources may be transmitted for scouting, training or coaching purposes during the contest.

Play: While the visiting team is batting, two home team personnel are behind home plate (a) using a radar gun, (b) charting pitches, or (c) videotaping the game during the opponent’s at bats. Ruling: Legal in (a) and (b). In (c) the umpire will warn the personnel. If they do not immediately comply with the rule, they will be removed from the stands.

NCAA rules now allow a manned video camera to be stationed in a designated area. The video may not be transmitted for scouting, training or coaching purposes during the game.
Pitcher’s Stance Subject of Change

Edited verbiage in Rule 9-1a better defines a legal pitching position from the windup. The rule states that the pitcher must stand facing the batter with his pivot foot on or in front of and touching the rubber with the other foot free. Allusions to the pitcher’s shoulders have been eliminated, along with a prohibition for the pitcher having his entire free foot in front of the pivot foot.

The NCAA Baseball Rules Committee believes the new rule helps clarify the pitcher windup position rule in light of trends observed in pitching today with regard to what constitutes an illegal windup position. It eliminates provisions that are not easily enforced by umpires and it also aligns more closely with the MLB pitcher windup position rule.

Doubleheaders Addressed

Two Approved Rulings for Rule 5-7-d provide guidance as to what constitutes a doubleheader, and to ensure doubleheader rules are applied consistently.

A.R. 9 notes that a scheduled stand-alone seven-inning game shall be prohibited, while A.R. 10 notes that a seven-inning game that was originally scheduled as a part of a doubleheader, and was never started, or had been halted or suspended, may be played as a seven-inning contest the following day or at a future time. That allows for collaboration between the umpires, home game management and the visiting team, which provides them with the flexibility of never starting or having to halt the game once it has been started. All three entities must be present when the decision is made.
Rules Regarding Uniforms Changed

Two changes regarding uniforms were approved by the NCAA Baseball Rules Committee.

According to new language in Rule 1-14e, only a pitcher may wear a jacket while serving as a base runner. When worn, it is to be buttoned or zipped. A pitcher may wear a jacket under the uniform top while batting. No other player is permitted to wear a jacket as the outer garment while serving as a base runner, a batter or a defensive player.

Also, an approved ruling was added to Rule 4-7. The rule states that only players, coaches and ball/bat persons are to be dressed in the team’s game uniform. All others (e.g. team managers, athletic trainers, etc.) shall be dressed appropriately for their specific team responsibilities.

Play: The base coach gives a jacket to a runner. The runner is his team’s (a) pitcher, or (b) other player.

Ruling: In (a) the pitcher is allowed to wear the jacket while running the bases. It must be buttoned or zipped, however. In (b), the jacket is not allowed for a player other than the pitcher.

Get in Shape to Umpire, Not Vice Versa

Many umpires procrastinate until just before the season of the sport they are working to get into “game shape.” That method of thinking can have negative effects.

The downside? Pulled hamstring muscles, injured quadriceps muscles, sore Achilles tendons, sore back muscles, just to name a few. The fact is the body needs the minimum of six weeks or much longer to get used to the amount of stress being placed on it. Sometimes we refer to that as the period of adaptation. Simply put, the body adapts and makes the physiological adjustments to perform more efficiently. All of that involves cardiovascular fitness, strength training and flexibility training. Neglect in any one of those areas by umpires can be a nightmare for not only the official but assigning secretaries, who suddenly are forced to find replacements.

There are proactive steps that umpires can take to prevent some injuries and finish the season strong:

Cardiovascular fitness

It is vital because the human body is made for movement. The heart and lungs are key components. Umpires should have a regular routine that involves strengthening the heart and lungs. That can be achieved by doing activities such as biking, swimming, tennis, walking, jogging, hiking, etc.

However, an official must know his or her target heart rate range. When engaging in aerobic activities the heart needs to work between 60 percent and 80 percent of its maximum effort. Five minutes into your workout, check your pulse to get your heart-rate range. In the example provided, a 45-year-old official would strive to keep his or her heart rate between 105 and 140 beats per minute. A quick way to do that is to check for 15 seconds and multiply by four. If your pulse is 30 beats in 15 seconds, it is 120. Therefore, that official is staying within his or her heart rate range of 105 to 140 beats per minute.

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the American Heart Association, Americans should be exercising three to five days a week. Spending at least two days a week in a strength-training session. It is wise to perform between eight and 12 repetitions and two to three sets; resting a few minutes between sets.

The first week or two, muscles will be sore because of the adaptation period. After that you should notice improved energy and more muscular endurance. Benefits will go far beyond officiating, like completing more chores among other things.

Strength training

Weight-bearing exercises will build muscle tone and definition. Push-ups, pull-ups, sit-ups and any other activities that put stress on muscles in the body improve balance, take stress off bones and joints, reduce fat and burn calories (even while you are sleeping).

Advantages of strength training include more energy stored in the mitochondria of cells, translating to more energy during high intensity games.

Muscle tone also will make you fit and confident. Perception is reality, so fans, coaches and players are more likely to have a negative opinion of an overweight and out-of-shape official. You could be the best official on the field, but quite often you are judged rightly or wrongly by how you look in uniform. Spend at least two days a week in a strength-training session. It is wise to perform between eight and 12 repetitions and two to three sets; resting a few minutes between sets.

Flexibility training

It is arguably one of the most neglected aspects of officiating. Cats and dogs instinctively stretch many times a day; humans do not. Working a game immediately after the pregame conference is a dangerous practice.

Muscles need to be stretched in order to improve flexibility and prevent injuries. Great athletes understand that fact. They know that their careers can be extended if they have improved

See “Fitness” p. 12
Fitness

Continued from p. 11

Flexibility. There is a correlation between stretching and fewer injuries.

Flexibility training includes exercises such as sitting toe touches, standing quadriceps stretch, full body curls, calf stretches, etc. Stretching should be done at least twice a day for about 10 to 20 minutes. Each stretch should last no longer than 20 seconds. Over time that technique will improve range of motion and can improve energy. Tai chi and yoga are two popular exercises that have been known to improve overall flexibility.

Getting fit and staying fit transcends time and offers benefits that go well beyond officiating. Get in shape and stay in shape. You will be a better official on and off the playing field and will improve your overall health and wellness.

Note: This column is for informational purposes. Consult a physician for specific medical advice.

When and How to Change a Call

If you haven’t umpired long, you probably don’t know how much of a philosophical change has occurred as far as “getting the call right” goes. It used to be that asking or helping a partner — engaging with him — on any call was simply not done. Balls could bounce over the fence, be called a home run and riots could ensue, but the calling umpire lived and died with it and a partner would not think of approaching him with unsolicited input. Beside the matter of pride, the thinking was that each umpire had to own his calls and if we ever got in the business of asking a partner for help or offering it, Pandora’s Box would be opened and there would be no stopping it.

Gradually, things evolved so that a plate umpire could glance at his partner on a checked swing and the latter would unobtrusively signal swing or not. The next step was to openly seek help, with the phrasing of the question indicating the desired response. “Did he go?” meant be honest, while, “He didn’t go, did he?” meant stick with the original call. Clear signals — fist up or safe — also became the norm. There was also a time element: If the defense immediately asked the plate umpire to seek help, he might do so, but if they, or he on his own, delayed in asking, he expected the base umpire would stand his ground.

Now, of course, we must openly seek help on a checked swing if the defense asks for it.

It is also accepted to seek help in other situations. For example, home run fair-foul calls, balls bouncing over a fence that are ruled a home run, balls dropped on a tag play, etc. It is also OK — even recommended — to offer a partner unsolicited help in certain cases, and the rules offer guidance in that area as well. “Get the call right” is the operative philosophy.

When is it proper to engage our partners? It comes down to the “piece of the puzzle” concept. If the calling umpire saw every aspect of a play but simply missed the call — for whatever reason — he should not try to wiggle out of it and put his partner on the spot by seeking help. If, on the other hand, an umpire senses that he missed some piece of the puzzle because he got blocked out or obstructed, he not only can but should seek help.

If you know your partner missed a call and you are 100 percent convinced that it was only because he was missing a piece of the puzzle and was not just guilty of bad judgment or timing, you should intervene.

In a game several years ago, a batter clearly interfered with a catcher’s throw to second to retire a stealing runner. For whatever reason the plate umpire did not chalk up an out. To make matters worse, when the defensive coach protested, the umpire called his teammates together for their input. They did not change the call, even though they knew it was wrong, because there goes Pandora’s Box. That was not a case where the calling umpire was missing a piece of the puzzle; he saw everything and just didn’t pull the trigger. That is solely his to die with.

In another game, the first-base umpire in a three-umpire crew called a runner out on the back end of a double play, with the fielder stretching to catch the throw. The instant the call was made, the runner and first-base coach starting yelling and pointing to the fielder’s foot. The umpire immediately sensed something must have happened that he didn’t see. Without waiting to be asked to seek help, he motioned the plate umpire to come down the line and asked him what he saw. Nothing, he said. But the third-base umpire, positioned in the infield, came over and said the fielder was a foot off the bag when he caught the throw. The call was changed to safe. The defensive coach came out and asked if the umpires were just going to put all calls to a committee vote from then on, but that was the extent of his protest.

Three points: First, the umpire sought help because the reaction he got told him that it was more than a safe-out situation. When we make judgment calls that cause a violent reaction, it’s so easy to get in the “Don’t question me” mode. Then we pay no attention to the nature of the reaction. A good umpire will process how the reaction unfolds. It’s one thing if it’s a matter of yelling, “He beat the throw” or, “That pitch was a foot low” — we must stand our ground. But if it’s, “He dropped the
Players can be unreasonable, but they are also more honest than we sometimes give them credit for. Just as the law gives credence to spontaneous statements made in the heat of the moment on the theory that the speaker reacted automatically without having time to think up a line of baloney, when a whole bunch of players instantly react the same way, it is probably an honest reaction that needs attention.

Second, the umpire asked for help because he knew the fielder’s stretch caused him to be straight-lined. He couldn’t see the foot in relation to the bag. He was in proper position but the play developed so that he happened to end up missing a piece of the puzzle.

Third, it was ultimately the first-base umpire’s decision whether to reverse the call. While it is more understandable to reject input that is unsolicited rather than sought, neither makes particular sense, given that in both cases one must be 100 percent convinced before acting. In any event, the calling umpire must be the “decider.” Only he can decide whether the input would have affected the outcome, and there can’t be a situation in which partners are arguing, with one saying “You’re wrong!” and another saying “You’re wrong!” That would really not go down well.

Even if you’re the only one in the crew who thinks something is amiss, don’t be afraid to be the Lone Ranger and stop the game. If you’re wrong, you’ll lose a few seconds and move on; if you’re right, you could prevent a disaster.

What must happen in those scenarios is that once an umpire decides to seek help, all members of the crew should convene, as happened in the 2013 World Series with Dana DeMuth’s play in the first...
Change a Call
Continued from p. 13

All six members, including the outfield guys, got together, even though some members were not in a position to offer any input. The reason is once a final decision is made, the losing coach can’t start petitioning the umpires who were not involved in the discussion to come to his aid. Also, you never know where that crucial piece of information might come from.

When the circumstances indicate that you’re missing a piece of the puzzle, don’t be obstinate — seek help; if you’re sure, stand your ground. When you know your partner is missing a piece, get engaged. Having a feel for when to seek help and when to offer it unsolicited separates great umpires from good ones.

Warning, Ejection for Anthem Standoff

To end so-called National Anthem standoffs, Rule 5-15a-(5) regarding misconduct has been approved.

If a player does not return to his dugout immediately after the playing of the national anthem, the umpire-in-chief is to warn the head coach that failure to comply results in the ejection of the head coach and offending player(s).

Play: Both teams are on the foul line during the National Anthem. One home team player and one visiting team player is standing on the foul line more than 10 seconds after the Anthem has finished. The umpire-in-chief has warned both head coaches but (a) neither player has returned to his respective dugout, (b) the visiting player goes to his dugout but the home team player is still on the foul line, or (c) both players return to their dugouts. Ruling: In (a), after both coaches have been warned, the coaches and players involved are ejected. In (b) only the home team player and coach are ejected. In (c) because the players complied, there is no penalty for either team except for the warning.

Think Inside the (Batter’s) Box

Baseball, at all levels, constantly looks for ways to improve pace of play. A number of requirements are in place in an attempt to establish a better flow.

One rule in place is that the batter must keep at least one foot in the batter’s box throughout his time at bat [7-1c (1)].

That includes the batter receiving his signs from the third-base coach, or from any coach giving signs. A recent trend is for the head coach to remain in the dugout while his team is on offense. The head coach will then give his signs to the hitter and runners from there.

A batter is allowed to step out of the batter’s box only in the following situations:

- When the batter swings at a pitch.
- When the batter is forced out of the box by the pitch.
- When a member of either team requests and is granted time.
- If a defensive player attempts a play on a runner at any base.
- If a batter feints a bunt, or attempts a “drag bunt.”
- When a wild pitch or passed ball occurs, or if the catcher doesn’t catch the pitch for some other reason.
- When the pitcher leaves the dirt area of the pitching mound after receiving the ball.

- When the catcher leaves the position to give defensive signals.

When a batter steps out of the box and doesn’t meet one of the listed exceptions, the umpire should direct the batter to return to the box immediately. The umpire has the option of assessing a penalty strike if the batter refuses to comply with the request to return to the box.

Play 1: B7 steps out of the box for the sole reason of adjusting his batting gloves and resetting. Ruling 1: That is not permitted. The batter should be asked to step back into the box and charged with a penalty strike if he refuses.

Play 2: B3 disagrees with a called strike on the first pitch of the at-bat. He then steps out and voices his displeasure. Ruling 2: Not permitted. The umpire should instruct B3 to return to the box.
Effective communication between players and umpires is vital to facilitating a fair and trouble-free competition. But there may not be another sport where that relationship is more pronounced than between umpire and catcher in the game of baseball.

Effective communication begins with the greeting between the two prior to the initial warm-up pitches. At the least you should exchange first names during that greeting. Developing a relationship with a catcher comes from the way you speak to him. Being respectful while still maintaining the distance required to distinguish your authority is of the utmost importance. There is great power in using a person’s first name while communicating with him.

The communication that takes place between catcher and umpire should have a purpose. Avoid making idle conversation in an attempt to get “chummy” with the catcher. Most often, that catcher is going to come to bat while his team is on offense during the game, and you may have to call him out on strikes. That “chumminess” may alter your judgment when that catcher is up to bat, or make it awkward to get back to a working relationship after you do ring him up.

Some umpires like to talk to catchers about things they don’t want them to do during the game. Some will tell catchers not to pull pitches into the strike zone that are on the margins or not to hold a pitch that they think should have been called a strike. One option is to wait until something like that happens and address it at that time. If you have to, tell the catcher, “Just catch the ball where it is pitched, and your pitcher will get the best chance of having a strike called.”

If you start to see a pitcher using theatrics that show his displeasure with your ball-strike calls, urge the catcher to go talk with his pitcher to calm him down. If you can defuse that situation covertly through the catcher, you may not need to deal with it in a more explicit manner that might heat up tensions in the game. Likewise, if bad blood is brewing between teams in a game, it is worth the effort to send a catcher out to send a stern warning to a pitcher if you think there might be some sort of retaliatory inside pitching coming.

Perhaps the most important aspect of working with catchers is making sure you can get a good look at pitches. There is nothing more difficult than trying to see pitches when the hitter is crowding the plate, the catcher is setting up inside and the pitcher is throwing hard from a sidearm delivery. Ask catchers who are setting up inside in such situations to get settled as early as possible so you can adjust to where they are by moving higher in the slot. If you’re still having trouble seeing, ask them to move their shoulders slightly away from the hitter as the pitch is delivered to create an opening through which you can see the pitch.

One of the great feelings in baseball umpiring is being able to tell a catcher in the ninth inning of a game that you have enjoyed working behind him. Establishing a strong working relationship with him from the outset of the game will increase the likelihood of that happening.

While checking the ball, Timothy Vessey, Olympia, Wash., may be communicating with the catcher. Discreet dialogue is one of your best game management tools.

The strike zone that are on the margins or not to hold a pitch that they think should have been called a strike. One option is to wait until something like that happens and address it at that time. If you have to, tell the catcher, “Just catch the ball where it is pitched, and your pitcher will get the best chance of having a strike called.”

If you start to see a pitcher using theatrics that show his displeasure with your ball-strike calls, urge the catcher to go talk with his pitcher to calm him down. If you can defuse that situation covertly through the catcher, you may not need to deal with it in a more explicit manner that might heat up tensions in the game. Likewise, if bad blood is brewing between teams in a game, it is worth the effort to send a catcher out to send a stern warning to a pitcher if you think there might be some sort of retaliatory inside pitching coming.

Perhaps the most important aspect of working with catchers is making sure you can get a good look at pitches. There is nothing more difficult than trying to see pitches when the hitter is crowding the plate, the catcher is setting up inside and the pitcher is throwing hard from a sidearm delivery. Ask catchers who are setting up inside in such situations to get settled as early as possible so you can adjust to where they are by moving higher in the slot. If you’re still having trouble seeing, ask them to move their shoulders slightly away from the hitter as the pitch is delivered to create an opening through which you can see the pitch.

One of the great feelings in baseball umpiring is being able to tell a catcher in the ninth inning of a game that you have enjoyed working behind him. Establishing a strong working relationship with him from the outset of the game will increase the likelihood of that happening.

While checking the ball, Timothy Vessey, Olympia, Wash., may be communicating with the catcher. Discreet dialogue is one of your best game management tools.

Perhaps the most important aspect of working with catchers is making sure you can get a good look at pitches. There is nothing more difficult than trying to see pitches when the hitter is crowding the plate, the catcher is setting up inside and the pitcher is throwing hard from a sidearm delivery. Ask catchers who are setting up inside in such situations to get settled as early as possible so you can adjust to where they are by moving higher in the slot. If you’re still having trouble seeing, ask them to move their shoulders slightly away from the hitter as the pitch is delivered to create an opening through which you can see the pitch.

One of the great feelings in baseball umpiring is being able to tell a catcher in the ninth inning of a game that you have enjoyed working behind him. Establishing a strong working relationship with him from the outset of the game will increase the likelihood of that happening.
When the game is on the line, will you be ready?

The only CCA approved mechanics. Used by Divisions I, II, & III conferences nationwide. The 2015 Baseball Umpires Manual from the CCA features hundreds of Referee’s exclusive PlayPic® and MechaniGram® graphics and has the most complete information available on new and changed mechanics and points of emphasis.

ORDER TODAY
Call 262/632-8855 or visit www.referee.com/promo/ccabaseball
Item Code: CCABS15 • Price: $19.95 • Pages: 248 • Size: 5.5" x 8.5"
FREE SHIPPING on every CCA Baseball Manual*

*Free shipping applies to standard domestic shipping in the continental 48 states only. Call for international and expedited rates.