



MEMORANDUM

February 4, 2021

VIA EMAIL

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

FROM: Randy Bruns, Secretary-Rules Editor  
NCAA Baseball Rules Committee.

Fritz Hamburg, Chair  
NCAA Baseball Rules Committee.

SUBJECT: NCAA Baseball Playing Rules Update.

This communication is being shared to provide some preseason rules guidance for the 2021 season.

**COVID-19 Rules Waivers:** Due to challenges resulting from COVID-19, playing rules waivers for several sports have been granted for the 2021 spring season. The playing rules waivers are consistent with the guidance included in the previously published NCAA Resocialization of Collegiate Sport documents. In this regard, the NCAA playing rules committees and staff will continue to monitor any additional developments and make adjustments as appropriate.

The following waivers are effective for the 2021 season:

1. To permit teams to utilize a designated area in the bleachers behind the dugout to space uniformed team personnel. This is a waiver of NCAA Rule 1.16.b.
2. To permit the pitcher to have a wet rag dampened with water in their back pocket to prevent or discourage a pitcher from going to the mouth or blowing on their hand before delivering the pitch. The pitcher may go to the rag, when not on the pitcher's plate, with the pitching hand to get moisture on the hand for grip. The pitcher must wipe the hand before engaging the pitcher's plate. This is a waiver of Rules 9.2.d and 9.2.e Note 3.
3. To permit the start or completion of a game with one umpire in the event of an unusual situation such as injury, illness, or positive COVID-19 testing. The intent is to maintain the playing rule, Rule 3.6, that the game officials are the umpire-in-chief (plate umpire) and one, two, three or five field umpires, but would permit that game to be completed in extenuating circumstances.
4. To require that the head coach may only come to the middle point of their respective foul line (45' mark) to maintain proper social distancing when coming to the field to ask a question about a call in the field. The umpire that made the call should approach the coach's position at a proper social distance. To also require that the head coach may not enter the dirt circle around home plate to ask a question about a call at the plate, when making a line-up change or during the pre-game/home plate meeting. This is a waiver of Rules 3.6.e; 4.4; 5.5; and Appendix E.

N a t i o n a l C o l l e g i a t e A t h l e t i c A s s o c i a t i o n

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5. To allow, by conference rule or mutual agreement prior to the start of the game, teams to start each extra inning (10th inning in a 9-inning game or 8th inning in a 7-inning game) with a runner on second base. This waiver should be administered as follows. The player starting the extra inning at second base is the player in the batting order immediately before the first batter of the extra inning. This is a waiver of Rule 5.8.d.

**Major Rules Changes:** As you may know, the NCAA Baseball Rules Committee approved a number of rules changes during their annual meeting in July 2020. The complete list of the new rules changes is located [here](#). A copy of the 2021 and 2022 rules book has been mailed to each head coach and conference commissioner. A free digital version of the rules book is posted at [ncaapublictions.com](http://ncaapublictions.com) and additional physical copies may be purchased as well.

**Bat Barrel Compression Testing Delayed for Divisions II and III:** Bat testing is required for all divisions beginning with the 2021 baseball season. Bat testing includes three steps:

1. A visual inspection of the bat;
2. Conduct a ring test; and
3. Conduct bat barrel compression testing.

All bats used in competition must undergo the bat testing procedure and be identified as approved with a destructible sticker. **Please note that in April 2020, the Playing Rules Oversight Panel (PROP) delayed the implementation of bat barrel compression testing for Divisions II and III by one year to be effective beginning with the 2022 season. The visual inspection and ring test are required for all divisions during the 2021 season.**

**Catcher's Chest Protectors:** Beginning for 2021 season, all catchers must use a chest protector certified to the NOCSAE commotio cordis protective device standard at the time of manufacture, or they must wear an alternative protective device certified to the NOCSAE commotio cordis protective device standard at the time of manufacture.

Thank you for your attention to this memorandum. If you have any questions, please contact the baseball secretary-rules editor, Randy Bruns ([rbruns11@gmail.com](mailto:rbruns11@gmail.com)), or the baseball national coordinator of umpires, George Drouches ([georgedrouches@gmail.com](mailto:georgedrouches@gmail.com)).

FH/RB/BB:brr

cc: NCAA Baseball Rules Committee  
NCAA Registered Baseball Umpires  
Selected NCAA Staff