



NCAA BASEBALL – NOTES FROM THE SECRETARY-RULES EDITOR
MARCH 20, 2019

The 2019 is off to a great start, except for the usual crazy early spring weather. There have been some very competitive non-conference games as teams prepare for the start of their conference seasons. Let's look at a few questions that have been received about the new rule changes.

Rule 8-2-d – Hit By Pitch

Without question, a hit-by-pitch situation is often a difficult decision to make due to the number of factors that must be considered. Did the pitch actually hit the batter? Did the batter make an intentional movement to get hit? What was the location of the pitch? The number of players that were moving intentionally to get hit by pitches during the past couple of seasons was a concern that led to adding a strike to the penalty.

One situation that causes a lot of discussion is when a batter is hit by a pitch that is within the lines of the batter's box. Part of the new rule allows a batter that **freezes and gets hit by pitch within the batter's box to be awarded first base**. However, most batters who see a pitch coming at them within the batter's box will make some type of movement to avoid being hit, especially if they have already started a forward movement to potentially swing at the pitch. The rule at the bottom of page 71 states that "A batter may not make a movement to **intentionally** get hit by the pitch, regardless of the location of the pitch." In all cases, but especially in the case of a pitch within the batter's box, make sure that the batter intentionally moved to get hit and was **not moving to avoid the pitch** coming at him. **The benefit of the doubt when the pitch is within the batter's box should be with the batter**, but if the umpire judges that there was intentional movement to get hit, enforce the rule as written.

Rule 7-11-p – Runner's Lane Interference – Point of Emphasis for 2019

Please re-read the wording of this rule on page 69, especially Note 1 and the Exception. We continue to get questions or video clips about this rule. Umpires must be aware of where the batter-runner is running the last half of the distance to first base, especially when there has been a bunt or chopper hit in front of home plate or any time the catcher makes a throw to first base. It appears that some players are running inside the foul line intentionally to make this play more difficult for the defense and hoping that interference won't be called. Remember that any of the following three things can lead the umpire to rule interference if the batter-runner is running illegally:

- 1) His being outside the lane alters the throw of a fielder;
- 2) The runner hinders or alters a fielder's opportunity to field the throw; OR
- 3) The batter-runner is hit by the throw that has been made in an attempt to make a play.

The runner can exit the running lane on his last stride or step to reach the base if he has been running legally within the running lane to that point.

While runner's lane interference is not reviewable by video review on its own, it can be considered as a factor during a review of a force or tag play when the possible interference takes place in the immediate vicinity of first base, similar to other forms of obstruction or interference. As a Point of Emphasis for the 2019 season, umpires must be more aware of this situation and properly enforce this rule.

Pace of Play Issues – Charged Conferences and Timing Between Innings

Teams are adjusting to the new rules about charged conferences and the timing of the period between innings. Review the document posted on Arbiter under the Secretary-Rules Editor Notes section about “Defensive and Offensive Charged Conferences” from January. The purpose of the new rules is to eliminate unnecessary delays in the game and to create more consistency in the pace of the game. It is critical that umpires continue to enforce these rules each inning of each game and use common sense and good communication skills with the players and coaches. Keeping the game moving is important in creating a good game experience for players and spectators alike.

Wishing everyone involved in college baseball continued success as the season progresses!

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