



August Plays and Clarifications

Comments from the Director of Umpires:

Welcome back Softball to the 2020 Olympics in Japan! Yes, Softball has been voted back as a sport played in the 2020 Olympics in Japan. Will it be played in the Olympics after 2020? Only time will tell. However, whether Softball remains in the Olympics after 2020 or not, for now we can say we are back. A lot went into getting this vote accomplished not only on the World Stage but also on the USA stage. The work done by our Executive Director Craig Cress and his staff to showcase our sport was outstanding. Now that we are back in 2020, the real work begins. I am sure that from our Executive Director, USA Team Director, Head Coach, Communications Department, National Championship Director and all the National Office Staff they welcome the challenge and the results will be as we have all wanted.

Now, one would ask what does this have to do with the Umpire Program. It means our umpire program will have the opportunity to be highlighted on the Olympic stage. It also means that only one or a maximum of two umpires will have that opportunity in 2020. Why do we mention this? We mention it so we as an umpire program understand that being an Olympic umpire is obviously a great accomplishment but should not be the only goal as an umpire. We have so many opportunities in our program today that all of our umpires should set an achievable goal for their umpire career.

One of the highest goals is becoming a World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) Certified Umpire and all the opportunities that come with it are just one example. We have the USA Junior Olympic (JO) Cup that is quickly becoming a showcase event for our teams and umpires. We have all of the National Championships that umpires can attend and excel showing the softball world just how good our overall program is. We have our award programs that can honor all of our umpires from those that go out and umpire league games day in and day out to those that reach the upper level of their classification of play.

What does all this mean? Let us not lose sight that while being an Olympic Umpire is an incredible goal and honor, being an ASA/USA Softball Umpire can and does carry the same honor. Only one or two ASA/USA Softball Umpires will be selected as Olympic Umpire but 25,000 plus will carry the name as ASA/USA Softball Umpires and beginning in 2017, USA Softball Umpires.

In summary let's not lose our focus by wanting to be an Olympic Umpire but instead focus on being a great ASA/USA Softball, soon to be an USA Softball Umpire. By continuing to set and strive to meet our umpiring goals we will make our umpire program an even better program than we currently are.

Bat Testing:

Bat testing is an important part at our National Championships. The only National Championships that do not perform bat testing are the 16" Slow Pitch and the Senior Slow Pitch National Championships. As an Umpire-in-Chief of any National Championships that require bat testing, it is imperative that we are familiar with the method of testing, the non-linear bat list and our Rule 3, Section 1A[1-3]. As umpires that may or may not be involved in the bat testing process Rule 3, Section 1A[1-3] must be reviewed and any bat that does not meet this rule should not be allowed to be tested and removed from play at that point.

With the majority of our Fast Pitch Championships in the books and our Slow Pitch Championship right around the corner, let's review a few things:

1. Bats used in our Slow Pitch Championships can have the 2000, 2004 or the 2013 Certification mark on them, or they meet Rule 3, Section 1A[3]
2. Bats must have the certification mark and appear on the approved bat list
3. Bats must not appear on the Non-Approved Bats with Certification Marks
4. When bat testing, the bat must test above 1450 PSI for Slow Pitch and 1550 PSI for Fast Pitch unless it is a non-linear bat.
5. If it is a non-linear bat, refer to the nonlinear bat list for the compression number the model of bat must exceed.

We have had a few issues with bats at Fast Pitch National Championships not being allowed because they did not pass the compression test. However, after a few phone calls from Championship Directors, coaches and even manufactures we were able to ascertain the bats in question were non-linear bats and were listed on the non-linear bat list. It is imperative we become familiar with this list or at least check this list if there is any doubt as to whether a bat is approved for play or not.

If we follow these few suggestions on bat testing the results from this testing will be easier on all those involved from the players, coaches, umpires, UIC and Championship Directors.

Plays and Rulings

Play: R1 on 2B B2 hit a ground ball to F6 and is able to beat the throw and is safe at 1B. F3 returns the ball to F1 who is in the pitcher's circle. B2 now R2 overruns 1B, turns left towards right field and begins their return toward 1B. When R2 is approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ the way back to 1B, R2 stops and immediately takes off to 2B and makes it safely. The umpires allow this and the coach from the defensive team protests that the rule has been misapplied.

Ruling: The protest is upheld and R2 is called out for a violation of the Look Back Rule. **Rule 8, Section 7T[3C4]:** A batter-runner who over-runs first base toward right field, turns left and moves back toward the infield in any direction except directly toward second base, is committed to first base and must return non-stop to first base.

Play: R1 on 1B and B2 hits a fly ball toward F7. R1 believing the ball is not going to be caught takes off toward 2B. F7 makes a diving catch. R1 retreats to 1B and is obstructed between 1B and 2B. F7's throw to 1B beats R1 back to 1B. The umpires call R1 out at 1B. The offensive team protests that R1 cannot be called out between the two bases where R1 was obstructed.

Ruling: Calling R1 out is upheld in the protest. The umpires judged that R1 would not have safely returned to 1B had there been no obstruction since leaving a base early on a fly ball is one of the five reasons a runner can be called out between the bases in which they were obstructed. **Rule 8 Section 5B [1A]:** An obstructed runner may not be called out between the two bases where obstructed. Exceptions: Leaving a base before a fly ball was first touched.

Effect D-E: The obstructed runner is out if properly appealed.