



April 2019 Plays and Clarifications

Fast Pitch Pitcher Taking a Signal:

One of the most asked questions in today's Fast Pitch Game is about the pitcher taking a signal off the pitcher's plate. Ever since the pitchers and coaches started using numbers and arm bands with the signals on them, pitchers are taking their signal from behind the pitcher's plate. This is legal by USA Softball Rule 6A Section 1D which states: "while on the pitcher's plate, the pitcher shall take a signal or appear to take a signal with the hands separated. "The ball must remain in either the glove or pitching hand. We allow the signal to be taken off the pitcher's plate as long as they still do or simulate doing so on the pitcher's plate.

This also means after the pitcher takes a signal off the pitcher's plate, they must step on the pitcher's plate with the hands motionless for enough time to take a signal or simulate taking a signal. The pitcher then must bring their hands together for not less than one second and not more than 10 seconds, (Rule 6A, Section 1E). This could be a very short period and meets the definition of talking a signal if the hands are motionless.

To summarize taking a signal off the pitcher's plate is legal as long as the pitcher takes or simulates taking a signal on the pitcher's plate, brings their hands together for at least one second and then completes the pitch.

GAME MANAGEMENT

One of the most important parts of being an umpire is growing with the game and learning what methods works well for you when it comes to Game Management. We all have techniques that we have learned from umpiring games, watching other umpires manage difficult situations, listening to lectures on game management and above all else discussing difficult situations with other umpires. While we have gained new information about handling different situations, we still have our own ways. Something that worked well in 1985 does not necessarily mean it will work in 2019.

We all have had those situations where coaches and players have disagreed with a umpire's decision. Regardless of what we say the person who disagrees would not believe our ruling. Sometimes they would protest and other times they continued to bring it up. Some would even come out with the rule book to show us where we were wrong. In the old days we would say "if you bring that book out here you will be ejected." However, as we have grown as umpires and UICs we find that having the rule book as a reference can and often does take a bad situation and make it better. Just because a coach wants to look at the rule book should not be a reason to eject them. Tell the coach we need to finish this inning and then we can look at the rule book over by the dugout. Using the rule book can and will defuse the situation if your rule knowledge is good. In our Championship program, disputes about a rule interpretation lead to protests, which are decided at the time of the protest and quite often with the aid and use of the rule book. So, whether it's Championship play, or local league play our goal is the same, get the ruling right, and sometimes it just might take a look at the rule book to assure a correct ruling.

As a UIC I take a rule book with me when I am called to the field for a protest. When I give a ruling and ask the coach if they want to see it in the rule book they normally say yes. Once they see it in the rule book, they are very grateful that we showed them and the whole situation is defused. In addition, we have been able to teach

a coach a rule. This has been used at a National Championship as well as an International Championship and both times it helped resolve the situation.

However, there are times when no matter what you do, a coach and / or a player, will remain upset and possibly do something that gets them ejected. Rule 4 Section 8B states that “an ejected participant must leave the grounds and have no contact with the umpires or participants in the game.” When a player or coach is ejected, they should leave the grounds to a place where they may not have any contact with the players and or coaches. For example, at the Hall of Fame Stadium Complex, we require them leave the stadium but do not make them leave the grounds of the whole complex. If their team is playing on field 4 at the HOF Complex, they must leave the stadium grounds but can stand outside the fence and see the game. Our point here is the ejected participant should leave the area of the field so they will not cause more issues. It also means we, as umpires, should not try to see if we can still see them so we can forfeit the game. We should make sure they have left the area so they cannot have contact with you as the umpire or any of the players to prevent having to forfeit a game.

Umpire personalities are as different as the umpires themselves. The following recommendations should become part of your game management process:

- Grow as you become a better umpire. Use all the avenues available to defuse a bad situation which can include showing a coach the rule in the rule book. It could help you not have to eject anyone.
- Don't always depend on pulling the rule book out and showing someone. At times telling them where they can find the answer to their question specifically in the rule book can also help. Give them a Rule number whenever possible.
- When you must eject a participant, do so, and have them leave the grounds. If they go outside the fence area and cannot contact, you and or the players.
- **Even though we use the theory the ejected player should be out of sight and sound, do not go out of your way to look for them and make them move because you can still see them.**
- Use all people skills available to manage all situations and grow each time a difficult situation arises.

If we try and keep these things in mind it will help you with your game management skills.

To learn more about Game Management, preference the 2019 Umpire Manual on line and easy to access.

Equipment: Bat Sensors: The Equipment Testing and Certification Committee is continuously reviewing all equipment involved in our game. At the 2018 USA Softball Council Meeting the committee reviewed an external sensor made by Blast Motion that mounts externally to the knob of a bat. The committee felt that the way the sensor was attached, and the data shown the committee regarding the sensors inability to become detached from the knob by accident, was enough to recommend the sensor should be allowed during play. The Committee also felt the design did not add to the length of a bat since a batter could not truly grip the sensor attached to the knob like many of the Slow Pitch Players do. It was recommended by the committee the Blast Motion Sensor should be approved for play. We are sure that you will be seeing them soon and when you do know they are approved for play.

Certification Marks: At our 2018 USA Softball Council Meeting the Equipment Testing and Certification Committee approved the New USA Softball Bat and Ball Certification Marks. The approval was for the 2020 calendar year based on the contractual agreement with our Equipment partners. Some Equipment partners asked if they could immediately start using the new certification marks since a lot of 2020 model year balls and bats are in design and production. When presented to the Equipment Testing and Certification Committee, they felt this would be a good idea. The committee then presented this to the USA Softball Board of Directors with their recommendation to allow the manufactures to start with the new certification marks immediately. The

Board of Directors agreed and approved the recommendation. The result is you could see the new certification marks on bats in this years Championships. The certification marks are like the old ASA marks with USA Softball in them. The current ASA certification marks will still be allowed. The new certification marks for bats all game and for Adult Fast Pitch and all Slow Pitch are shown below



All Games



Adult Fast Pitch and all Slow Pitch

The new certification marks for balls are below:



Max Compression 300.0 Lbs

Max Compression over 300.00 lbs and less than 375.0 Lbs.