



July 2023 Plays and Clarification

From the Director:

We are off and running with the 18U and 16U Gold starting this week. We have completed our special invitational tournament, the JO Cup, last week. They fought the weather the whole time and ended up with a Champion in the 16U Gold and Co-Champions in the 18U age group.

It is hot all over the country so remember to hydrate for your National Championship. It is incumbent on you as an umpire to be prepared and ready to go. This just does not mean umpiring it also means physically. Do what needs to be done to be in shape and ready to go. Also have fun and enjoy the experience.

Fast Pitch Camp:

As a reminder the Fast Pitch camp will be held Oct 4 – 8th hosted by USA Softball of DFW (Plano Texas). A flyer coming out in a few days will have all the information. Reach out and sign up as we hold it to 60 attendees so space could be limited.

Play: B2 a slap hitter, is hit by a pitched ball while out in front of the batter's box. **(Meaning out of the batter's Box)** In a) B2 ducks to try to avoid being hit but is still struck in the head and b) B2 is hit before having the time to avoid being hit by the pitch.

Ruling: In a) If in the umpire's judgment the batter made an attempt to get out of the way, the umpire should award the batter 1B. In b) since the batter made no attempt to get out of the way of the pitch this would be a dead ball and keep the batter up to bat.

USA Softball rules apply to a hit batter in three ways. Rule 7 Section 4H and L applies if the batter swung or prevented the ball from entering the strike zone. This would be a dead ball strike, Rule 8 Section 1F: When a pitched ball not swung at nor called a strike touches any part of the batter's person including the hands or clothing. EFFECT: Dead Ball the batter is entitled to first base without liability to be put out. EXCEPTION: If no attempt is made to avoid being hit, the batter will not be awarded 1B unless it is ball four.

USA Softball has always said that a pitch can fool a batter and they may not have time get out of the way. Umpires should use the thought process of the ball does not belong in the box and the benefit of doubt is given to the batter. When the batter is in front and out of the batter's box the reaction time is decreased, and they could be hit with the ball before they have time to react and get out of the way. In this case the umpire should use a similar thought process that the batter does not belong out front of the box and if the reaction time is reduced, the benefit of the doubt should be given to the pitcher.

So, apply the rule and use common sense when determining when a batter makes an attempt to keep from getting hit, while in the box does not have time to make an attempt or while out of the front of the box makes no attempt to keep from being hit. Keep in mind, it will always be a dead ball and a batter will either be awarded 1B or stay at bat with a ball added to the count.

NOTE: This is a play that was put in the Plays and Clarification in 2010. Some felt the statement saying out in front of the batter's box meant still in the box but in the front part of the batter's box. However, the play was about a batter who was out of the box completely in front of the box not in the strike zone. Hopefully the rewritten play and these notes help clarify.

Play: R1 on 2B and R2 on 1B with zero outs. B3 hits a line drive to F6 for the 1st out. F6 throws to F3 for the appeal of R2, out #2. R1 returned to 2b safely but thought the play on R2 was the so third out. R1 then headed towards the 1B dugout. R1 never leaves the field of play. R1 realizes their error and runs to 1B. F3 tags R1 while R1 standing on 1B. What's the call?

Ruling: In this play R1 started at 2B and a pitch was thrown. This eliminates their possibility of going back to 1B. Rule 8, Section 3B states: When a runner or batter-runner acquires a base by touching it before being put out, the runner or batter-runner is entitled to hold that base until legally touching the next consecutive base or is forced to vacate it for a trailing runner... We know if a runner misses a base or left a base too soon on a fly ball, they can go back and touch that base prior to a pitch to the next batter. We also know that if a runner on second base is forced to third base by a runner on 1B they cannot go back to 2B unless the previous runner R2 or BR, is called out thus removing the force out, Rule 1 Force out.

This takes us to once starting on 2B and a pitch is thrown going back to 1B would be running the bases in reverse order. Rule 8, Section 3D, A runner shall not run the bases in reverse order to confuse the fielders nor make a travesty of the game. Nothing in the rule talks about judging intent to do either.

When the R1 left 2B thinking there were 3 outs but realizing there was only two outs they must return to 2B or they are subject to running the bases in reverse order. Once they realized their mistake, they must return directly to 2B and if they don't the ball should be called dead, and the runner called out. **Rule 8, Section 3D Effect.**

Special thanks to Raquel Bushman, USA Softball of Minnesota, and her group for this question. Great question and stirs a lot of discussion. We will add this play to the casebook next year.

Play: In the bottom of the first inning F1 for the home team brings to the attention of the umpire that the game ball is sticky and appears to have a foreign material transferred to it. As the umpire is discussing with the visiting team it is discovered that their F1 has pine tar on their uniform. What is the proper ruling?

Ruling: When a foreign substance is applied to the ball, the first offense is an illegal pitch. After the first offense if any player continues to place a foreign substance on the ball, that player shall be ejected from the game. In addition to this, if the pitcher is discovered with a non-approved drying agent or grip enhancement substance they shall be ejected.

Note: This wording was previously in the USA Softball rule book but was unfortunately deleted when a reformatting of Rule 6A and Rule 6B were conducted.