

Plays and Clarifications

May 2026

By now, your softball season is well underway as many of you have been calling ball for high school, college and travel ball. Remember, it's never too early to up your fitness level, both mental and physical, to work games in the heat of the summer. Start hydrating now. This is especially true for those of you getting ready for the 2026 USA Softball Championships. You owe it to yourself, your partners and your UIC's to be ready so you can give your best to the teams and the events you are working. We want everyone to stay healthy and focused as you work your games this year.

Uniform

Make sure your uniform and equipment are clean and ready. USA Softball has partnered with Honig's for our uniform and equipment sales to continue to provide access to great uniforms in the sizes and colors you need. This will also allow for more choices for equipment.

Charcoal grey pants are now part of the official umpire uniform for USA Softball. Honig's stocks charcoal grey pants manufactured by Fechheimer. Follow your UIC's instructions regarding proper uniform for your Championship.

New Rules for 2026

Make sure you prepare for the 2026 season by reviewing the 2026 USA Softball rulebook and mechanics including any 2026 rule changes. The updated editions are all located on the USA Softball website or by using the following links:

[USA Softball Official Rulebook](#)

[2026 USA Softball Umpire Manual](#)

[2026 USA Softball Rule Changes with Comments](#)

Plays

Play: (Any Game) With runners on 1B and 3B, a ground ball is hit down the third base line. The ball hits the base and rebounds back toward home plate, hitting R1 who is advancing in foul territory toward home. No fielder had an opportunity to make a play on the batted ball. The ball then bounces toward the third base dugout. What is the correct ruling on this play? Should the umpires call dead ball as soon as the ball hits R1? Should R1 be called out for interference?

Ruling: Play on. No interference should be called and the ball remains live. The runner is not out when they are hit with a fair untouched batted ball over foul territory that, in the umpire's judgement, no fielder had an opportunity to make an out.

Rule 8-8-E

Play: (Any Game) With one out and bases loaded, B5 hits a deep fly ball to center field and F8 makes a diving catch. R1 tags up and is able to score easily from 3B, while R2 leaves 2B too

soon and R3 is thrown out at 2B for the third out of the inning. After the play is complete, the defensive coach makes a verbal appeal of R2 leaving 2B too soon. What is the correct ruling and does R1's run count?

Ruling: In this case, the runner who left too soon was not the runner who scored. Since this is considered a time play and not a force out, all runs scored in advance of the appealed runner and prior to the legal appeal count.

Rule 5-5-C, Rule 8-7-F, Rules Supplement 1K

Play: (Men's Fast Pitch, Men's Modified Pitch, Women's Fast Pitch, All JO Fast Pitch divisions of play) As B5 goes to the plate to begin their at-bat, B6 takes a position in the on-deck circle near the opposing team's dugout. Is this allowed?

Ruling: In the games identified above, the on-deck batter may take a position within either on-deck circle as long as the on-deck batter is behind the batter and not on the batter's open side.

Rule 7-1-A Exception

Play: (Any Game) With 1 out, R1 on 3B and R2 on 2B, B4 hits a fly ball to F8. Both runners tag up and attempt to advance after the catch. The on-deck batter leaves her bat in the on-deck circle on the first base side of the field to direct the runner(s) coming home. When F8 attempts to retire R1 with a throw to F2, the throw ricochets off the fence and hits the on-deck batter's discarded bat. What should the umpire do?

Ruling: When the ball hits the on-deck batter's discarded bat, the ball is blocked due to offensive equipment not in the game. The ball is dead, runners return to the last base touched at time of block and if the blocked ball prevented the defense from making an out, the runner being played on is out.