

USA Softball Plays and Clarifications

July 2026

July National Championships

July marks the peak of our Junior Olympic (JO) National Championship season. The month begins with the 16U and 18U GOLD Nationals in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, followed by the highly anticipated "One True National" from July 20–26 in Johnson City, Tennessee. Additionally, multiple Regional National Championships will take place throughout July and into August. We wish the best of luck to all participating teams and the selected umpires officiating these prestigious events.

December Umpire Training & WBSC Certification Opportunity

Looking ahead, we are pleased to announce an umpire training camp in Florida this December, held in conjunction with the High-Performance Program (HPP) event. This camp will serve a dual purpose:

1. **USA Softball Mechanics:** A section dedicated to sharpening USA Softball three-umpire mechanics.
2. **WBSC Certification:** We have recently been approved to host a World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) Certification Camp during this event. This is an exceptional opportunity for eligible USA Softball umpires to earn their international certification domestically.

Space for both tracks is strictly limited. Interested umpires should contact their Regional Umpire-in-Chief (UIC) as soon as possible to secure a spot.

The Critical Importance of Lineup Management

As we enter postseason play, precise lineup management is critical to proper game administration. Historically, lineup discrepancies are the top protested items at National Championships. Umpires must remain vigilant, particularly when transitioning between pool play and elimination brackets.

Review the following plays and rulings to ensure consistent enforcement:

Play: In a JO fastpitch pool play game, Team A chooses to bat their entire roster, utilizing Extra Players (EPs). In the third inning, the coach attempts to use batter #12 as a courtesy runner for the first baseman (batter #2). The umpire informs the coach that while any player on the roster may serve as a courtesy runner in pool play, courtesy runners are still restricted to the pitcher and catcher positions.

Ruling: Correct procedure by the umpire. Although pool play rules allow any rostered player to act as a courtesy runner, the runner may still only replace the pitcher or catcher.

Rule 8, Section 10C, Rule 8, Section 10A [3]

Play: In a JO fast pitch pool play game, Team A is batting their entire roster, with the additional players listed as EP's. In the first inning, batter 12 (B12) courtesy runs for the pitcher. In the third inning B12 now courtesy runs for the catcher(F2). After a pitch to the next batter Team B brings this to the umpire's attention.

Ruling: The plate umpire is responsible for tracking courtesy runners and should have proactively prevented the infraction by informing the coach that B12 was ineligible after already running for the pitcher. Because the oversight occurred and B12 entered the game, B12 becomes an illegal runner. The penalty for an illegal runner must be enforced: B12 is disqualified from the game. Normally, a legal substitute would replace the disqualified runner; however, because Team A is batting their entire roster, the only available option is for the starting catcher (F2) to return to the base. **Rule 4, Section 6C; Rule 4, Section 6F [3C]**

Play: In a JO fastpitch elimination game, Team A submits a lineup card batting their entire roster with multiple EPs. At the pregame plate meeting, the umpire informs the coach that the lineup is illegal because only one (1) EP is permitted during elimination play.

Ruling: Correct procedure by the umpire. Thoroughly inspecting the lineup card at the plate meeting is critical, especially during the first round of elimination play when coaches may mistakenly attempt to carry over pool play roster-batting rules. In elimination play, a maximum of one EP is allowed. This results in either:

- A 10-player lineup (9 standard batters plus 1 EP).
- An 11-player lineup when combined with the DP/FLEX option (10 batters including the DP and EP, with the FLEX listed in the 11th spot).

The umpire must not accept an illegal lineup card and should allow the coach reasonable time to correct it before the game begins. **Rule 4, Section 1C [1]**