

April 28, 2025-Softball Announcements

Let's Talk Interference:

Interference is on the offense. It is an immediate dead ball. Think of a situation of a runner going to second base on a batted ball to the second baseman. It is the obligation of the runner to allow the defender to make the initial play unimpeded. What is the initial play?

ART. 3 . . . Initial Play – A fielder is considered to be making an initial play on a fair batted ball when the fielder:

- a. Has a reasonable chance to gain control of a ground ball that no other fielder (except the pitcher) has touched. (8-6-10a)
- b. Has a reasonable chance to catch the ball in flight or catch the ball in flight after it touches another fielder.
- c. Fails to gain control of the batted ball and is within a step and a reach (in any direction) of the spot of the initial contact.

Once the initial play is made the obligation for the runner goes away on this batted ball. If the second baseman were to deflect the ball into the runner then it is not interference.

Other Situations

Situation: Team A turns in a lineup at the plate meeting that after being reviewed by the coach/captain is confirmed and accepted as official by the plate umpire. After the lineups are official while still at the plate conference the following situations occur. In a) Team A's coach tells the umpire "My DP is going to pitch, and my FLEX is not going to play defense." In b) The coach tells the umpire "My DP is going to pitch and #3 (B4 in the lineup) is going to continue to play offense but not defense." In c) The coach tells the umpire "#5 (B6 in the lineup) is going to pitch and #3 (B4 in the lineup) is going to play first base." In d) The coach tells the umpire "My DP is going to catch and #6 (B6 in the lineup) is going to play offense only." In all cases the umpire does not allow the changes to occur stating that the pitcher and catcher listed on the starting lineup must face at least the first batter on defense (one pitch). **RULING:** Incorrect ruling in all cases. Once the plate umpire accepts the lineups and makes them official, changes to the lineup are then allowed with all substitution rules applying. In a) this is a substitution as the FLEX is not playing defense, so they are leaving the game. This should be noted on the lineup card and the coach informed the FLEX has left the game and has one reentry. In b & d) it is legal for the DP to play defense for any player other than the FLEX and that player continue to play offense and no player has left the game. These changes should be noted on the lineup card so the umpire is aware who is eligible for a courtesy runner. In c) this is a legal defensive change and should be noted on the lineup card to ensure the proper player is eligible for a courtesy runner. The requirement of the players listed in the starting lineup as pitcher and catcher to face the first batter (one pitch) is listed in the courtesy runner section of the rule book. This only applies in the bottom of the first inning and only if that player utilized a courtesy runner in the top of the first inning. Since these changes were made at the plate conference there is no requirement for the players to ever face a batter. (3-3-6e, 4-1-2b, 8-9-2)

Situation: In the third inning Team A is playing defense with R1 on first base, no outs and a one ball no strike count on B2. Team A's pitcher legally starts their pitch but fails to release the pitch resulting in R1 leaving the base prior to the ball leaving the pitcher's hand. The umpire rules this a dead ball as the

illegal pitch was not delivered and places R1 back on first base and awards a ball to the batter. Play continues with R1 on first base and B2 batting with a two ball no strike count. **RULING:** Correct ruling. When an illegal pitch is not delivered the ball becomes dead and the illegal pitch is enforced. In this situation the pitcher's illegal actions, not releasing the pitch, resulted in the runner violating the rule governing their staying in contact with their base. This is a different situation from previously discussed plays where the illegal pitch and the runner leaving early were both enforced. In those situations, the illegal action by the pitcher did not result in the violation seen by the offense. Due to this difference, as detailed in case play 7.1.2 Situation J, both penalties would be enforced in those situations. However, an illegal action by the defense should not allow them to gain an unfair advantage by creating a violation by the offense. (3-6-13c, 5-1-1o, 6-2-4e, 7.1.2 Situation J, 8-6-18)