



**IOWA CONFERENCE  
WOMEN'S SOFTBALL  
NEWSLETTER #2**



Here are a few points of emphasis and areas that we need to address from games in the past few weeks.

Many of our problems are coming with fly-ball coverage in the outfield. If you do not have any base runners on, any fly ball that is hit with the centerfielder coming straight in or any fly ball hit to the right side of the outfield should be gone out on. Difficulty of catch should not enter into this. Going out anytime results in the umpire going OUT to the outfield and not merely turning around to judge the fly ball. Some other codes of softball or baseball may use a mechanic that just gives the umpire the luxury to just turn around, but if we are to cover a fly ball properly we need to get out and get to an angle parallel to the flight of the ball to see the catch or no catch. Umpires should come to a stopped and set position when the fielder attempts to catch the ball so that our eyes are set and not moving up and down with our running motion. Fair/Foul balls are ruled on only by an umpire positioned on the line at the time of the pitch and only if the umpire turns or goes out to judge the ball landing fair or foul. The plate umpire should have fair/foul responsibilities up to and over the base, but if the plate umpire does not come up with a definite call and appears they need help on the call, the base umpire should be ready to help with the fair or foul signal.

Fly ball coverage for umpires positioned in the middle of the diamond with runners on base should use the middle 2/3 or V in the outfield for their coverage area, unless the left or right fielder is going towards the foul line. When in doubt, go out – no matter how many base runners you have. In the two-umpire system, the plate umpire needs to get out from behind the plate and either trail the batter runner and work with priorities and cover the base runner or plays that are imminent. As a plate umpire, we need to be able to be ready to fill at any base and communicate, especially to the back of the base umpire. If the base umpire goes out they should not return until the play is over unless there is an emergency situation such as a rundown or something they may be in a position to lend assistance on. If they return this must be communicated so that the plate umpire knows they are back and in a position to help. (i.e.) Player is in a rundown between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> base and the base umpire can be in a position to help at second base on the back end of bracketing the rundown.

No players may wear bandannas under their hats, catcher's helmets, or batting helmets or anywhere on their person. There is a player in the conference that wears a bandanna under her catchers helmet and this is not permitted. Batting Helmets and Catchers Helmets must bear a permanent (molded in, embossed, or indestructible seal) indicating compliance with the NOCSAE helmet and mask standard. NOCSAE stickers are not allowed and the logo must be permanent.

We have a few fields that have tarps on the field and/or places where a ball could lodge in or under the fencing. Coaches should be told in the Pregame to instruct their players that if the ball is lodged or becomes blocked they should put their hands up and we can get an

umpire out to judge if the ball is blocked and make the proper award. One base to base runners on a pitched ball, two bases from time of throw on a thrown ball or two bases on a fair ball that becomes blocked or deflects off a player and becomes blocked or goes out of play. If the player chooses to reach for the ball and plays it we can keep it alive. If the ball is lodged or blocked or the player chooses not to play the ball the ball is dead immediately and we make the proper award if the ball is in fact blocked. Offensive players should continue to run until the play is ruled dead.

A few points on handling infield fly situations, especially with problems with wind. The base umpire may signal with a closed fist in the air, but should not verbalize unless the plate does not give the infield fly call and the call it is very obviously missed. The base umpire can help with depth and can signal showing the plate umpire that they think it should be called, but only in situations where wind or the plate umpire looks like they may be having difficulty judging or finding the ball. Appropriate signals for the infield fly situation should be made umpire-to umpire before the batter takes her place in the batters box and use a signal when the situation is no longer in effect – 2 outs or runners no longer occupying 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> base. A couple of questions to also consider is does the fielder have trouble getting to the ball to make a routine catch. Secondly you would have to consider if the runners were put in jeopardy because the catch should have been made. Still the runners should be aware of the situation and are not forced to go even if dropped. In NCAA of course unless the infield fly is called it is NOT an infield fly, even though all the factors may be there and it should have been called.

As far as the coach's conduct, they should never be allowed to continue to question calls throughout the game. If they cannot get off the subject, simply state that we have heard your side, lets play ball. If they continue, give them a formal warning and after that we simply have an ejection. Coaches must go to the beyond the outfield fence and not near the dugout or bullpen. A one-minute warning shall be issued if the removal is not followed in a timely manner and a forfeit may be declared for in favor of the team not in fault. The non-ejecting umpire should handle all removal situations if warranted.

You can never disallow a protest even in the case of judgment. If coaches absolutely want to protest then you will show them the rule and that this is a judgment call and what you saw and secondly go to the protest section to show them that judgment calls cannot be protested. This is if a team really pushes the protest and you have to go to the book.

Please make sure whenever we brush a base, pitching rubber or home plate that our butt is facing the outfield.

Here are some actual plays that have happened and you can “make the call”

**Play # 1** Runners on first and second and one out. Batter hits a little blooper that goes just over the pitchers head toward the back of the pitchers circle and just out of her reach. Just as the ball passes the pitchers glove, untouched, the runner from 2<sup>nd</sup> going to 3<sup>rd</sup> crashes into the short stop who is right in the base path. The umpire signaled obstruction and then the 2B picks up the ball and throws out the runner from second going to third out who had crashed into the SS and fallen down. The umpire killed the play and awarded the runner going from second to third to third (forced). The coach wanted the umpire to rule that her shortstop had a chance to play the ball and that there we could not limit protection to just one player and the pitcher is not counted in a ball passing an infielder in this situation

anyway. The coach mentioned that the once the ball goes by the pitcher it can only be a fielder's ball to play and only one of those fielders that will be provided the protection.

**Ruling:** The umpires ruled that the only player entitled to the ball (Rule 9-13 d) and therefore protection from being interfered with was the pitcher who just missed the catch over her shoulder as she turned back and to her left. The umpire brought the crew together to discuss if in fact the shortstop had a play on the ball, as many times the plate will have a better view of the whole picture in front of them. The umpires ruled that the pitcher was the only one that could have played the ball. The SS was playing back and the ball was just missed being played by the pitcher. Prior to the catch the SS had only made it to the baseline by that time the crash had occurred. Both players were knocked down in the collision and it was the case where it was either interference, (if the SS could have played the ball) or obstruction (if the SS was not the player afforded the protection and she impedes the progress of the base runner). If ruled interference, the ball is dead immediately and the runner is out and if obstruction, a delay dead ball signaled and at the end of the play either issue the award if the obstructed player is put out or warn the player and head coach if no award is given. The next time the same player obstructs after being given a warning, the award is an automatic one-base award.

**Play # 2.** With two strikes the batter attempts to bunt and misses the ball and the ball which is out of the strike zone and hit the batter in the leg. **Ruling:** Dead ball swinging strike. Since the batter attempted to bunt and did not pull the bat back this is a strike and the ball is dead. In this case it was strike three and the batter was out.

**Play # 3.** Batter bunts and plate umpire does not see the ball strike the batter-runner's shin while running to first base while completely out of the batters box. The base umpire kills the play and comes immediately to the plate umpire to give them the information and the plate umpire makes the out call. Any doubt if the batter was still in the batter's box with some part of her foot should be given to the batter and a foul ball ruled. If the base umpire actually knows that the ball hit the batter-runner completely out of the box the information should be given to the plate umpire and the call made by the plate umpire. The base umpire should not make the call on whether the batter is out, but rather give the appropriate information.

**Play # 4** Batter-runner runs to first base and during her last step to first base has one foot outside the baseline (which is outside the running lane) . The catcher fields the bunt and throws straight up the line and hits the batter-runner in the middle of the back with the ball. **Rule 9-9 d2 Note:** A batter-runner is considered to be outside the runner's lane if either foot is completely outside either line and in contact with the ground. **(Exception)** The batter-runner may run outside the runner's lane to avoid a fielder attempting to field a batted ball and/or to touch the base on the last stride.

**Play # 5** Players are beating their hands on the metal facing of the dugout making noise and the opposing coach brings this to the attention to the umpire. **Rule 13-4-b** No player shall use equipment in any way other than that it is intended by the manufacturer (i.e. banging bats and balls in the dugout). When brought to the attention of the umpire by the opposing coach, the umpire shall issue a warning to the offending head coach. Any subsequent violation shall result in the abused equipment being removed from the game and not returned to the dugout. In this case the actions would have to be discontinued.