

SUP Central Hub

Important Update Concerning Illegal Pitches

Umpires have stepped up to call illegal pitches as never before, and are realizing that the cleanest, most honest way to call the game is to rule on all violations without discretion. Calling illegal pitches consistently is neither easy nor pleasant, and the SUIP realizes this season, because of the increased vigilance on pitching, has been a particularly difficult one.

Dee Abrahamson, Secretary-Rules Editor, and I sent a memo to coaches and administrators yesterday containing important information about illegal pitches. Umpires should review this memo in its entirety, posted on this website. This update will expound upon different points in the memo for further clarification and understanding regarding the calling of illegal pitches.

[I]n an effort to maintain this point of emphasis (Flow of the game) and diminish the unintended consequences, it has been determined that in applying the pitching rules (Rules 10.2-10.6), pitchers should be given the benefit of the doubt when executing a legal pitch.

For umpires, this means that pitchers must receive the benefit of the doubt when judging a pitch as legal or illegal. Pitchers must comply with all pitching rules, and umpires are not to discriminately decide when to enforce the rules.

The expectation is that coaches will continue to coach pitchers in a manner that is in compliance with the pitching rules and umpires will call illegal pitches in the spirit of fair and equitable competition but also in pursuit of maintaining the flow of the game. Specifically, umpires are asked to take the approach that a pitch is legal until the pitcher proves otherwise by engaging in any movement not in compliance with the pitching rules. Again, umpires need to enforce the pitching rules and yet, give pitchers the benefit of the doubt if there is any question of legality.

Umpires are to call rules violations, including illegal pitches, when they occur. Umpires are to approach the pitch as being delivered legally, until and unless the pitcher engages in movement not in compliance with the rules. This approach is similar to the way umpires view all pitches as strikes until they become balls. Again, pitchers are to receive the benefit of the doubt if there is any question of legality.

In this difficult season, while pitchers make adjustments to comply with rules that umpires have been lax in enforcing in the past, umpires must present with greater professionalism than ever before.

Umpires need to be less defensive and more approachable and must raise their games in every way to be above reproach in all aspects of their officiating. If the umpire cannot succinctly explain the rule violation, it should not be called.

Umpires must discontinue the practice of approaching and explaining to pitchers after each call.

Rule 10.8 Effect –Note(Page 129): The umpire who called the illegal pitch shall explain the violation to both the pitcher and her coach, if requested.

Umpire should not talk with players at all, unless necessary to administer the games. When explaining illegal pitch calls to coaches, explain using the terminology of the rule. All rules should be enforced accurately and consistently without excuses - not because the SUIP asks you to, not because you want a postseason assignment. The only justification for calling illegal pitches and other rules violations is because it is the right and correct ruling.

Continue to call your games with integrity, fairness, accuracy and consistency.

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