

SUP Central Hub

Information Regarding Pitching Rules

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March 29, 2010

TO: 2010 NCAA Divisions I Head Softball Coaches, Directors of Athletics, and Senior Woman Administrators of NCAA institutions that sponsor Division I Softball.

Conference Commissioners, Senior Woman Administrators, and Umpire Coordinators.

FROM: Dee Abrahamson - NCAA Softball Secretary Rules Editor.

Kathy Strahm - National Coordinator, Softball Umpire Improvement Program.

We want to clarify recent concerns in the softball community surrounding the interpretation of illegal pitches. During the 2010 softball season, some have seen a rise in the number of illegal pitches called by collegiate umpires and inquired about rule changes and or application of the rule. The only change to the pitching rule is Rule 10.2.1.1, pitcher's foot position to take the signal.

In response to concerns following the 2009 Women's College World Series and responses to a National Fastpitch Coaches Association (NFCA) survey regarding the inconsistent and lack of enforcement of the pitching rule, the Softball Umpire Improvement Program (SUIP) placed a priority on the consistent enforcement of all parts of the pitching rules (Rules 10.2-10.6). The intent was to raise the level of integrity, fairness, accuracy and consistency by improving umpire education in order to enforce the rules established for the game without excuses or misunderstandings.

At the same time the SUIP set their priorities, the NCAA Softball Rules Committee identified points of emphasis that will be the focus during the two-year rules cycle. For the 2010 and 2011 cycle, the NCAA Softball Rules Committee identified 1) arguing balls and strikes; 2) pitcher's lane; 3) flow of the game; and 4) sportsmanship as the four points of emphasis. (Explanations of these points of emphasis can be found on pages 6 and 7 of the 2010 and 2011 NCAA Softball Rules Book). Neither the SUIP nor NCAA Softball Rules Committee anticipated their respective actions would result in the unintended consequence of conflict between improved consistency in enforcing the pitching rules and improving the flow of the game. Therefore, in an effort to maintain this point of emphasis 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.

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.

Finally, in an effort to provide the same information to coaches and umpires, the illegal pitches video shared with subscribing umpires via the SUIP Central Hub will be made available to coaches and non-subscribing umpires in front of the pay wall on the SUIP Central Hub. It will also be available via link on the NCAA softball website and NFCA website. Coaches and umpires are encouraged to view the video to clarify understanding of the specifics of an illegal pitch.

Thank you for your cooperation and assistance in disseminating this information to all interested parties and good luck in the remainder of your season. We look forward to seeing you in Oklahoma City.

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