

March 2010 Plays and Clarifications

Rule 6, Section 6, Fast Pitch:

Foreign Substance:

While traveling around the country to be an instructor at National Umpire Schools, Region Rule clinics or Local Association Umpire Schools it is always interesting to listen to the local umpires talk about rules and rule applications in our great game of Amateur Softball. Throughout the country our umpires ask about rules and plays that come up from time to time. Local umpires talk about rules in a general sense and how those rules apply in our 2010 ASA Umpire Manual Official Rules of Softball. It is refreshing to see umpires dig into the book to understand the intent of a rule and how its application applies to their situations.

One common question from all areas of the country, especially in the game of Fast Pitch but would apply to other games is “By rule, is dirt a foreign substance?” Do you need to wipe off your hand if you pick up dirt and rub it on your hands?” Rule 6, Section 6A. Fast Pitch states that a defensive player shall not at any time during the game be allowed to use a foreign substance upon the ball. Under the supervision and control of the umpire, powder resin and or an approved manufactured drying agent may be used by the pitcher.....

Why would we consider dirt, something common to the ground, a “foreign substance”? If a pitcher or any other defensive player picks up dirt and applies it to the ball we say “no”. We do not allow the application of any material to the ball. Players can apply resin to their hand, not to the ball. If a pitcher picks up a handful of dirt or wipes the ground with their hand, then rubs their hands together, there is no foreign substance being transferred. If a defensive player puts dirt in their hand and throws it on the ground, then catches a thrown or batted ball and returns it to the pitcher do we call this illegal? No. Example: If the catcher wipes their hand on the ground before catching the pitch and returns the ball to the pitcher without wiping their hand off do we have a violation of Rule 6? The answer is no. If we do not, then why do umpires from around the country say that the pitcher must wipe their hand off after touching dirt? Our Rule 6 is very specific, it says any “defensive player shall not at any time during a game be allowed to use any foreign substance upon the ball.”

So, if dirt can and has been used as a natural drying agent to dry off the hands, we do not believe it is mandatory for the pitcher to wipe off their hand if they pick up dirt, throw it to the ground or rub it into their hands. We do not allow dirt to be applied directly to the ball just as we do not permit any other substance. Therefore applying dirt to the hand and not wiping the hand off is perfectly legal by ASA Official Rules of Softball.

Rule 8, Sections 7O and Rule 5, Section 5B:

Interference and Does the run score:

This question comes from a play in a recreation league game playing by the ASA Official Rules of Softball and involves interference and does the run score. In this case both the rule governing interference and the rule that determines whether a run scores or not came into play and were applied to come up with the correct ruling.

Play: Bottom of the 7th inning score tied, two outs, R1 on 3B and R2 on 1B B5 gets a base hit scoring R1 from 3B. During the excitement of the winning run scoring, R2 never touches 2B. As the players are celebrating the offensive coach picks up the ball that has been returned to the infield and throws it to the other coach in the dugout. The defensive team protest that the runner from 1B never touched 2B and because the ball was thrown out of play they were unable to make a play on R2.

Ruling: Rule 8 Section 7O states: When a coach intentionally interferes with a batted or thrown ball, or interferes with the defensive team's opportunity to make a play on another runner Effect: The ball is dead. The runner closest to home is out. Runners not out must return to the last base legally touched at the time of the interference.

In this case the interference was caused by the coach after R1 had legally scored and the next runner closest to home would be R2.

Now we go to Rule 5 Section 5B [1] that states no "run shall score if the third out of the inning is the result of a batter-runner being called out prior to reaching first base or any other runner forced out due to the batter becoming a batter-runner."

Since R2 never touched 2B and even though they were called out as the result of interference the force out is still in effect. Therefore no run shall score, inning over and play on.

Rule 7, Section 2D [1-4]

Batting Out of Order:

There has been some confusion as to what the penalty should be for batting out of order. The following explanation is provided to help understand Rule 7, Section 2D.

Section D [1] Addresses batting out of order while the incorrect batter is at bat.

If the incorrect batter is at bat when either the offense or defense notifies the umpire of the batting out of order violation, the effect would simply be to replace the incorrect batter with the correct batter. The correct batter would assume the ball and strike count. Any advancement of runners or runs scored would stand.

Section D[2] Addresses batting out of order after the incorrect batter has completed their turn at bat and before a pitch (legal or illegal) to the next batter; or before the pitcher and all infielders have vacated their normal fielding positions and have left fair territory.

If the incorrect batter completes their turn at bat and then is discovered by the defense before a pitch to the next batter; or before all infielders have vacated their normal fielding positions, the player who should have batted is ruled out and the out would be recorded in the proper batter's position in the line-up. Any advancement by a runner(s) or any run(s) that scored because of the incorrect batter becoming a batter-runner would be nullified. Runners would return to their base(s). Any outs made because of the improper batting stand. The next batter to bat would be the player whose name follows that of the batter who was declared out for not batting in proper order with one exception. The exception would be if the incorrect batter is called out as a result of their time at bat and is the next scheduled batter. Simply skip them in the batting order as they have already been credited with an out, and the next person in the line-up would be the next batter.

Section D[3] Addresses batting out of order after the incorrect batter has completed their turn at bat and after a pitch (legal or illegal) to the next batter; or before the pitcher and all infielders have vacated their normal fielding positions and have left fair territory.

If the incorrect batter completes their turn at bat and a pitch is thrown to the next batter and then the batting out of order violation is discovered, or all the infielders have vacated their normal fielding positions, the incorrect batter becomes a legal batter. All action that occurred as a result of the incorrect batter would stand regardless of a run scoring, runner(s) advancing or outs made. The next batter would be the player whose name follows that of the incorrect batter. Any player(s) who missed their turn at bat or called out because of the incorrect batter will not bat until their spot in the line-up is reached again in regular order.

Section D[4] Addresses what happens if batting out of order occurs and a runner is on base when their turn comes up in the batting order.

No runners will be removed from a base to assume their proper position in the batting order unless they were properly appealed and removed from the base as in D[2] above.

If a batting out of order violation occurs and a player is on base when their turn at bat comes up, that player simply misses their turn in the batting order with no penalty until their spot in the line-up is reached again.

Situation 1: With R1 on 1B, B3 skips B2 in the batting order. The error is discovered by defensive team and reported to the umpire (a) after B3 has a 0-2 count, (b) after B3 has reached 1B safely advancing R1 and before a pitch to B4, or (c) after B3 has reached 1B safely and a pitch has been delivered to B4.

RULING: *In (a), B3 is replaced by B2 who assumes the 0-2 count; also any advancement by R1 is legal. (7-2D[1]) In (b), B2 is out and B3 is removed from base and bats again with a 0-0 count with R1 returning to 1B. (7-2D[2a]) In (c), no correction is made and B2 simply loses their turn to bat until it comes again in the batting order. (7-2D[3a])*

Situation 2: With no outs, R1 on 1B and B2 scheduled to bat, B4 comes to bat instead and grounds into a double play. The defense appeals B4 batting out of order before a pitch to the next batter.

RULING: *The double play stands and B2 is out for missing their turn at bat, resulting in the third out. B3 will lead off the next inning. (7-2D[2b])*

Situation 3: B3 leads off the inning followed by B1 and then B2 with all reaching base safely. With B3 now on 3B, B4 takes one pitch and the defense appeals batting out of order.

RULING: *The appeal is denied. B3, who is on base, merely misses their turn at bat with no penalty and B4 becomes the legal batter. (7-2D[4])*

Situation 4: (CO-ED) Female B2 hits a single. Female B4 inadvertently bats, skipping male B3 and hits a single. Now male B3 steps in to bat and one pitch is thrown when the manager of the defensive team appeals that male B3 is batting out of order.

RULING: *As soon as one pitch was thrown to male B3, everything female B4 did was legal. Male B5 should replace male B3 and assume the ball and strike count. Male B3 will not bat again until their turn reappears in the batting order. (7-2D[3])*

Rule Book:

I hope you have received your new 2010 rule books and have begun pouring through them. The National Staff has been looking for errors or other problems with the rule book. If you find any mistakes please send them to your Regional Umpire – in – Chief so it can be corrected in the 2011 book.

Something new in the 2010 book is a penalty page. It is located in the umpire version of the rule book between Rule 12 and The Rule Supplements, pages 107 and 108. This new section will assist umpires and other folks in looking up the penalties that apply to rule violations. If you find a penalty not covered please let us know so we may include it in next year's book. We would also appreciate your comments on the page to let us know if it is helpful or not.

Thanks for all you do for ASA Softball.