

Softball Rules Interpretations - 2022

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SITUATION 1: As Team A takes the field, the umpire notices that several players have adornments in their hair. In (a), F1 is wearing a bandanna as a hair covering; in (b), F4 is wearing a plastic visor; in (c), F3 has beads braided into the hair; and in (d), F5 has 3-inch bobby pins being used for hair control. The umpire rules none of these items are permitted and the players are not allowed to play until these items are removed. **RULING:** Correct ruling for (a) and (b). Bandannas and plastic visors are not permitted. Incorrect ruling for (c) and (d). Restrictions prohibiting hard items to control hair have been removed from the rules book; these players are permitted to play with these items in their hair. (3-2-5b, 3-2-12)

SITUATION 2: As Team B takes the field, the umpire notices that several players have religious head coverings and F4 is wearing a head covering for medical reasons. The umpire asks the coach to see the state association approval for the players to wear these head coverings. The coach cannot produce an approval for any of the players wearing these head coverings. The umpire rules that since F4 is wearing a head covering for medical reasons F4 is able to play, but none of the players with religious head coverings are permitted to play until these head coverings are removed. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. Players are allowed to wear religious head coverings without state association approval. However, any player wearing a head covering for medical reasons must have state association approval. (3-2-5c)

SITUATION 3: B1 bunts the ball in front of home plate. As B1 is running to first base with the right foot in the running lane and the left foot in fair territory, the batter is hit with the throw from F2. The umpire rules that since B1's left foot was in the air when struck, there is no interference. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. The batter-runner is considered outside the running lane if either foot last contacted the ground completely outside the lane. If the batter interferes with the fielder taking the throw at first base, interference should be ruled. (8-2-6)

SITUATION 4: With no outs and R1 on first base, B2 steps into the right-handed batter's box. In (a), the ball was just returned to F1 who is standing behind the pitching plate waiting for a signal from the coach, B2 steps out of the batter's box to take a signal from the third base coach. In (b), F1 is in contact with the pitching plate with hands together ready to pitch when B2 steps out of the batter's box delaying the game.

In both (a) and (b), the umpire calls a penalty strike on B2. **RULING:** In (a), incorrect ruling. If B2 is within the 10 seconds to be ready for play and F1 is not in contact with the pitching plate ready to pitch, B2 has not delayed the game. In (b), since F1 was in contact with the pitching plate with hands together ready to pitch, B2 is liable to receive a penalty strike if the umpire judges B2 has delayed the game by exiting the batter's box. (7-3-1)

SITUATION 5: In the first inning, Team A huddles as the players come off the field and prepare for their team's at bat. The umpire notices that they have huddled just behind first base in an area where overthrows are likely to occur. The umpire reminds the head coach they should not huddle in an area where overthrows are likely. **RULING:** This is acceptable. Although ultimately the head coach is responsible for player safety, it is advisable for the umpire to remind the coaches, possibly at their pregame conference, that if they choose to huddle they are not allowed to delay the game and should not huddle in an area where overthrows are likely.

SITUATION 6: In (a), Team A huddles as the players come off the field while Team B players are warming up for the next half-inning. As Team B is ready for play, Team A is still huddling. The umpire repeatedly asks for the first batter to take a position in the batter's box. After repeatedly asking for the batter, the umpire calls a penalty strike. In (b), Team B huddles prior to taking the field and takes longer than the one minute allowed between innings. After reminding the defense to take the field, F1 is not allowed to throw any warm-up pitches. When they continue to not take their positions, the plate umpire declares "Play Ball" and after 20 seconds awards the batter a ball for the pitcher not delivering a pitch. **RULING:** Correct rulings. In (a), the team preparing to be on offense is allowed to huddle as it comes off the field as long as it does not delay the game. Every attempt should be made to ensure the offense knows that play is ready to start and the lead-off batter needs to take a position in the batter's box. After being informed, if the batter fails to do so within the 10 seconds allowed, by rule a penalty strike can be assessed against the batter. In (b), the team preparing to be on defense has up to one minute from the last out of the previous half-inning for its pitcher to throw no more than five warm-up pitches. If the teams spend the majority of this allotted time huddling, the number of warm-up pitches allowed can be reduced to remain within this warm-up time. If the team continues to delay the game and the umpire has called for play to start, by rule after 20 seconds the batter may be awarded a ball for this delay. (6-2-3, 6-2-5, 7-3-1)

SITUATION 7: In the first inning, B1 comes to the plate with a bat that has an audible rattle. The umpire removes this damaged bat from play without penalty. In (a), B1 comes to bat in the third inning with a different bat that is dented. In (b), B3 comes to bat in the fourth inning with the damaged bat that the umpire removed from the game in the first inning. In both cases the umpire calls the batters out and restricts the batters and head coach to the dugout for the remainder of the game. **RULING:** In (a), incorrect ruling. When each damaged bat is initially detected, it is removed from the game without penalty. Even though this was the second time B1 brought a damaged bat to the plate, the batter did not attempt to use a damaged bat that an umpire had previously removed from the game. The bat is removed from play

without penalty. In (b), correct ruling since B3 attempted to use a damaged bat that was previously removed from the game by an umpire, the penalty is the batter is out and the batter and head coach are also restricted to the dugout for the remainder of the game. (2-4-3, 7-4-2, 7-4-15)