

Coaching Clinic - Notable Fastpitch Rules

USSSA Softball Fastpitch Rules

1) Obstruction (Defense) vs Interference (Offense)

- a) Obstruction is the act of a defensive team member which hinders a runner or changes the pattern of play or when a catcher or fielder hinders a batter unless the fielder is in possession of the ball or making an initial play on a batted ball. The act may be intentional or unintentional, physical, or verbal.
 - i) When a runner is obstructed while advancing or returning to a base, by a fielder who neither has the ball nor is attempting an initial play on a batted ball, it shall be a delayed dead-ball.
- b) Interference is an act which interferes with, impedes, hinders, or confuses any fielder attempting to make a play.
 - i) Offensive interference is interference (physical or verbal) by the team at bat, or when a runner creates malicious contact with any fielder with or without the ball, in or out of the baseline.
 - ii) Batter's box, play at the plate, and on-deck interference.

2) Dropped 3rd Strike

- a) The batter becomes a base runner when the catcher does not catch 3rd strike (ball hits the ground) AND
 - i) 1st base is NOT occupied with 0 or 1 out
 - ii) 2 outs

3) Infield Fly Rule

- a) An infield fly is a fair fly which can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort and provided the hit is made before two are out and at a time when **first and second base or all bases are occupied.**
- b) Does not include a line drive or an attempted bunt.
- c) Does not preclude outfielders from being allowed to make the catch. (outfielders can make the catch)
- d) RESULT: Umpire automatically calls the batter out.

4) Base Running

- a) Stealing is allowed except during a dead ball. Look-back rule is in effect.
- b) **Look-Back Rule (16' pitching circle)**
The rule is in effect when the ball is live, the batter-runner has touched first base or has been declared out, and the pitcher has possession of the ball (e.g. has the ball in their hand, glove, under arm or chin, between their legs) within the 16-foot circle.
 - i) **Any runner(s) in motion may continue without stopping or may stop once.**
 - (1) Any runner who is stopped or stops their motion must immediately move directly back to the last base touched or attempt to advance to the next base.
 - (2) Once the runner stops at a base for any reason, they may not move off that base.
 - ii) A batter-runner who overruns first and does not without delay attempt to advance to second is committed to return to first and stop.
 - iii) **The runner, off base, may not stand motionless.**
 - iv) There does not need to be any motion or recognition by the pitcher.
 - v) Failure of the runner to respond as indicated shall cause the Umpire to signal the runner out. The ball shall be declared dead.

- vi) If the pitcher no longer has possession of the ball within the 16-foot circle, the pitcher makes an attempt on any of the runners or a fake throw is made, this rule does not apply.
- vii) Being in the 16-foot circle is defined as both feet within or partially within the line. The feet may touch the line and extend outside the line. When the pitcher is in the pitcher's circle and a runner(s) is off the base, the pitcher is considered to be playing on the runner(s) when the throwing arm is raised or any forward movement of the body is made toward the runner. Movement of the head is not considered an attempted play. **(This section of the rule is not observed in the Mentor Girls Softball League)**
- viii) **EFFECT: The ball becomes dead immediately. The runner is out.**

5) Fair vs Foul Ball

- a) FAIR BALL. A fair ball is a batted ball which:
 - i) Settles or is touched on or over fair territory between home and first base or home and third base;
 - ii) Is on or over fair territory including any part of first and third base when bounding to the outfield.
 - iii) Touches first, second or third bases.
 - iv) While on or over fair territory touches the person of any Umpire or player or their clothing or equipment except the batter in the batter's box.
 - v) While over fair territory passes out of the playing field in flight.
 - vi) First falls or is touched on or over fair territory beyond first or third base.
 - vii) While over fair territory, an offensive play

The baselines and all bases, including home plate are in fair territory.

6) Delay of Game

- a) Pitcher
 - i) Once the ball has been returned to the pitcher to prepare for the next pitch or the Umpire says "play", the pitcher has 20 seconds to release the next pitch.
- b) Batter
 - i) A batter shall not delay the game by failing to promptly take their position in the batter's box within 10 seconds of the pitcher having the ball in the pitching circle, or by stepping out of the box when the pitcher is on the pitcher's plate.

7) Run Scores

- a) A runner scores one run each time the runner legally touches first, second, third bases and home plate or a runner starting at second in a tiebreaker inning touches third and home.
- b) **Runs scored would NOT count:**
 - i) When the third out is a force out.
 - ii) When the third out is a batted ball in flight that is caught or prevented from being caught by interference.
 - iii) If a base running infraction were the third out, runs scored by the following runner(s) would not count
 - iv) When a runner crosses home plate after a preceding runner is declared the third out for a base running infraction.
 - v) With two outs, if the base missed were the first to which the batter or runner was forced to advance, no runs would score.

8) Run Rule (Merci) awards a win to a team that has a:

- a) 12 runs lead after 3 completed innings or 2 1/2 innings if the home team is ahead.
- b) 10 runs after 4 completed innings or 3 1/2 innings if the home team is ahead.
- c) 8 runs lead after 5 completed innings or 4 1/2 innings if the home team is ahead.