



## 2017 Official Baseball Rules Amendments

Below is a summary of all rule changes and clarifications relevant to games officiated by the HBUA that have been implemented by the Official Baseball Rules Committee for the 2017 season.

### I. Field Markers for Positioning

Affected Rules: 3.10 Equipment on the Field

Teams may not use reference markers foreign to the natural ground (i.e. golf tees) or mark the playing surface in any manner prior to the start of a game, which create a reference point for defensive positioning during the game. If detected by an umpire, the umpire shall direct them to be removed from the field.

Any marking points created naturally by a player (i.e. marks on the dirt) during the course of a game are legal.

### II. Weather and Field Conditions Clarification Regarding Doubleheaders

Affected Rules: 4.04 Weather and Field Conditions and 4.08 Doubleheaders

The decision to start the second game of any scheduled doubleheader, be it conventional (30 minutes between games) or split (two separately scheduled games) rests solely with the umpire-in-chief. If, at any point during a scheduled doubleheader, if the first game is terminated for any reason, the second game is automatically postponed as well.

### III. Coach's Box Rule

Affected Rule: 5.03 Base Coaches

Beginning in 2014, it was a point of emphasis in baseball that no base coach may position themselves closer to home plate and / or fair territory than the boundaries of the coach's box, prior to a batted ball passing them. This point of emphasis shall now be relaxed – a base coach shall be permitted to stand closer to home plate or fair territory than the coach's box unless a member of the opposing coaching staff complains. At this point, the umpire shall strictly require the base coaches of both teams to stand entirely within the boundaries of the coach's box.

#### **IV. No Pitch Intentional Walk**

Affected Rules: Definition of Terms - "Base on Balls"; 5.02 Fielding Positions, 9.14 Base on Balls

A defensive team is no longer required to pitch to a batter in order to issue an intentional walk. After receiving a signal from the defensive manager, the plate umpire shall call "time", award the batter first base. Any runners forced to advance are entitled to do so at this time. Please note a team may still elect to intentionally walk a hitter the "traditional" way.

Furthermore, the plate umpire's award of first base to the batter shall constitute a pitch or play, meaning an appeal of a missed base, runner leaving early, half swing, batting out of order, or protest shall no longer be considered. A no-pitch intentional walk shall also fulfill a returning or substitute pitcher's requirement to pitch to at least one batter prior to being eligible to be removed from the game

#### **V. Legal Pitching Deliveries**

Affected Rule: 5.07 Pitching

The pitcher may not take a second step toward home plate with either foot, or otherwise move his pivot foot during their delivery. With no runners on base, this shall be an illegal pitch pursuant to rule 6.02(b). With a runner or runners on base, this shall be a balk pursuant to rule 6.02(a).

Furthermore, with a runner or runners on base, a pitcher shall be presumed to be pitching from the set position if he has his pivot foot parallel to and in contact with the pitcher's plate and his other foot in front of the pitcher's plate and must therefore fulfill the obligations of pitching from the set position prior to delivering a pitch unless, prior to the start of an at-bat, the pitcher notifies the umpire that he is pitching from the windup position. Upon receiving such notification from the pitcher, the umpire shall then inform the offensive team that the pitcher has declared he will be pitching from the wind-up position. In the event a pitcher assumes the rubber consistent with the set position, fails to declare to the umpire he is using the windup, and delivers a pitch from the windup, the pitcher shall be charged with a balk.

#### **VI. First Baseman's Mitt**

Affected Rule: 3.05 First Baseman's Glove

Upon complaint by the offensive manager or upon his own volition, should the umpire adjudge a fielder other than the one using a first baseman's mitt to be playing closer to first base than the first baseman, the umpire shall order the first baseman to use a regular fielder's glove. The other fielder shall, at this point, be permitted to use the first baseman's mitt.

To simplify, the umpire shall ensure the player closest to first base is the fielder who uses a first baseman's mitt.

## **VII. Runner Leaving the Baseline**

Affected Rule: 5.09(b)(1)

The wording of this rule has been modified to clarify that the physical act of a fielder in possession of the ball reaching to tag a runner is not required in order to adjudge a runner out of their baseline, if the umpire is convinced the runner's actions are in an attempt to avoid a potential tag.

## **VIII. Batter Overrunning First Base**

Affected Rule: 5.09(b)(4)

While a batter is entitled to overrun first base when going to first base, the protection provided by this rule shall not apply if they leave first base following their return to it.

## **IX. Runner Misses Home Plate**

Affected Rules: 5.09(b)(5); 5.09(b)(12); 5.09(c)(2)

A runner who has missed home may return to touch the plate regardless of whether the ball is alive or dead, except when:

- A following runner scores,
- The runner steps into the dugout, or
- The third out is made before the runner returns to touch the plate

## **X. Passing on the Basepaths**

Affected Rule: 5.09(b)(9)

Runners are still required to run the bases properly when being awarded bases with a ball that became dead during the play (such as a home run or ground rule double) and may be called out for passing. The following runner is **always** the runner out when two runners pass each other on the basepaths, regardless of which runner "caused" the passing to occur.

A runner cannot be called out for passing if they are not running the bases, such as when returning to a base after a foul ball or if runners meet with each other and/or a coach during a pitching change.

Furthermore, during a delayed dead ball following catcher's interference, a runner shall be called out for passing only if the result of the play stands **and** the interference disregarded because all runners including the batter have advanced one base before the passing occurred, or if the offensive manager elects to take the result of the play. In all other cases, the passing shall be disregarded, and the batter and runner(s) awarded bases accordingly.