

National Fastpitch Coaches Association
Rules and Official Committee Minutes

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 2, 2015 – Atlanta Marriott Marquis

Minutes by Karen Linder

IN ATTENDANCE:

John Bennett by phone, Vicki Van Kleeck, Mike White, Edith Gallagher, Brittany Stroop, Mike Christner, Pete Soliz by phone Terry Burdette, Steve Babinski, Joel Prickett, Tim Kiernan, Lisa Navas, Kathy Schoettle, Kathryn Gleason, Milt Simmons

- I. John Bennett called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m., asked committee members to review the manual that was emailed to them.

- II. Vicki Van Kleeck – Rules Secretary
 - A. Clarified the language of obstruction to become “In the act of catching”, it is a judgement call based on timing and defender’s ability to make a tag
 1. Question – Can the rule be changed to say “the fielder has to have the ball”, this will make it more clear. There was discussion about the play the happened in WCWS. Currently there are too many interpretations of the current rule and the wording to” have to have the ball “would make it easier to apply the rule.

 - B. New Language – simulating taking a signal from the catcher
 1. Pitcher needs to pause, with hands a part for at least 2 seconds. The 2 seconds are a part of the 10 second clock.
 2. Rationale – Pitchers taking sign from coach on arm band before stepping on the rubber are not pausing before starting the pitch. Umpire and pitcher are not ready.
 3. Mike White suggested changing the rule to say that the pitcher must take the sign on the mound with hands separated.
 4. Vicki Van Kleeck expressed concern about 2 second rule as each umpire’s time clock is different.
 5. John Bennett talked about the importance of informing coaches and pitchers of all levels as soon as possible as this rule will be emphasized and enforced this spring. It could potentially cause issues in the spring when the rule is enforced. Pitchers can work on practicing the timing now before the season starts.
 6. Committee discussed avenues for sharing this information by having videos for umpire clinics and coaching clinics.

- III. REDUCE RULE DIFFERENCES – John Bennett
 - A. Differences among organizations – 192 rule differences between organizations
 1. Goal is to try and develop more consistency in rules, which will make it easier to apply rules in games
 2. John is going to identify rules that can be adjusted to create more consistency and come up with a recommended rule change for all organizations
 3. John will contact person in charge of rules in NCAA, NAIA, ASA, and HS organizations with the specific rules that could be amended

- IV. EDUCATION PLAN
 - A. Ideas for how to educate coaches – What is the best to educate coaches?

1. Would it be helpful to have NFCA conduct a survey of coaches to identify good methods to communicate rules info, and to identify rules that need more explanation, or looked at be changed?
 2. Use videos, power point, webinar, podcast, or have a youtube channel with rules clarification for coaches to view at any time. Have videos that include “you make the call” segments.
 3. Invite coaches to the regional umpire education clinics, possible suggestion is to make it mandatory for coaches to attend or to view a rules video like basketball currently does.
 4. Have umpires or rules committee members speak at coaching clinics or team camps
 5. Educate coaches about Arbiter – free registration for coaches
 6. Have a goal to find ways to have umpires and coaches have conversations about rules and interpretations away from the field.
- B. NFCA FP Delivery – Is anyone reading the articles about rules?
- C. Use research/past surveys to identify which rules need clarification or adjusted.

OTHER DISCUSSIONS

- A. Desire for this committee to be more active and involved in rules development, potential rule proposals, and education.
- B. Timeline for new rules, 2 year process to get a rule implemented unless it is a safety rule
1. People can make proposals for discussion by the NCAA rules committee, the committee will then identify rules to experiment with in the fall.
 2. NCAA committee only has 2 calls, consider changing the timelines to get more input from coaches. Committee meets at WCWS and then sends rules to coaches for comments in the summer.
 3. Rules to be implemented in 2017 need to be proposed now.
- C. Rules to consider:
1. Adjustment to wording on obstruction and “in the act of catching” to “having the ball”
 2. Adjustment to Pitcher taking the sign, pitcher must take sign on the rubber with hands a part
 3. Safety base at first base. Would create consistency with other organization’s rules. Discussion about current rules in lower levels with the double base.
 4. Changing the recommendation for fences or screens in front of the dugouts to be 6 feet high from field level, this is a safety issue and can be an immediate proposal
- D. Discussion about the river and batters being hit by the ball
- E. Before making rule changes to create consistency in all levels, make sure there is consideration for competitive level.

V. CONFERENCE CALLS FOR 2016

Feb, April, May, Sept, Nov,- every other month conference calls, meet in Dec at convention

VI. MOVING FORWARD Action plan –

- A. Working on rule differences and creating consistency
- B. Educate coaches to understand rules better, create communication between umpires and coaches
- C. Identify other rule changes to consider

VII. Send agenda items to Brian

Adjourned at 11:30

DISCUSSIONS

Concerns about how rules show up

Needs to be education on the process

Change the process

The NFCA committee and the NCAA Rules Committee

Suggest to have more than 1 meeting a year – to get more input , want to meet more frequently

Goal to get coaches and umps to have same interpretations of the language

There will be regional umpire clinics sponsored by the NCAA that can emphasize new rule changes