



NCAA Softball Rules Interpretations and Clarifications – 2022 Season
Vickie Van Kleeck, Secretary-Rules Editor
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Rule 6.12 – Conferences

Possible Charged Conference Situations:

SITUATION 1: A foul ball down the line. While the outfielder is retrieving it, can the catcher (or any infielder) go to the pitcher?

RULING: This is not a delay of game situation. Once the ball is back to the pitcher, they need to break up.

SITUATION 2: A foul ball off the umpire or player, which is a situation in which typically the catcher will go out to the pitcher to allow some time for the umpire to recover.

RULING: In any injury situation, players are allowed to gather without being charged with a conference. The issue is that everyone is ready to go when play is resumed.

SITUATION 3: After the five (5) warmup pitches, can they gather on the mound if they are back before 90 seconds has expired?

RULING: Yes, the issue here is a delay of the game.

SITUATION 4: Following a home run the players gather at the mound.

RULING: This does not constitute a delay of game. When the runner crosses home, the defense needs to be ready to play.

SITUATION 5: The pitcher throws the first two (2) pitches to a batter that are called balls. As the ball is returned to the pitcher, an infielder quickly runs to the circle, quickly slaps gloves with the pitcher giving her brief words of encouragement and then immediately returns to her position.

RULING: This is not a charged player-to-player conference. The plate umpire should use good judgment in enforcing the time allowed between pitches.

SITUATION 6: The pitcher throws the first two (2) pitches to a batter that are called balls. The catcher or any infielder requests “time” to speak with the pitcher.

RULING: Once “time” is granted by any umpire, this is a charged player-to-player conference.

SITUATION 7: The pitcher throws several bad pitches in a row and a fielder approaches to calm them down without violating time between pitches.

RULING: This is not a charged player-to-player conference. If a player-to-player charged conference is granted, the offensive team may hold a conference, including base runners, who are no longer restricted to the vicinity of their base.

SITUATION 8: A foul ball leaves the field. A coach(es) intentionally delays getting new balls into the umpire to allow defensive players time to get together.

RULING: This is a game management situation. Umpires need to have an awareness of what the intent is here. It can be handled by a simple conversation with the coach, including a warning that a conference will be charged if they do it again.

SITUATION 9: The pitcher and catcher are struggling with getting on the same page with signals.

RULING: If the catcher needs to go out to talk with the pitcher this will be a charged player-to-player conference.

NOTE: These limited examples are not all inclusive of what may constitute a conference. These are a few examples designed to reflect the spirit and intent of Rule 6.12.

Player-to-Player Conference and Coach Joins Conference

If two or more defensive players meet to have a conference and a coach joins this conference here are the parameters to determine the situation:

- When the players get together and you see that a coach is getting ready to exit the dugout and come out to join the players this will be a team representative-to-player conference.
- If the players get together and there is no movement by a coach out of the dugout, this is a player-to-player conference. However, if the players have been meeting and eventually a coach joins the conference (there was no initial movement by a coach to come out of the dugout) **both** a player-to-player **and** a team representative-to-player conference will be charged.

Examples Which Should **Not** Be Considered a Conference

- All of the current no huddle allowances (fielder gives ball to pitcher after an out and they slap gloves, spontaneous celebration of good play etc.).
- Batter is put out and on the way back to dugout stops to talk briefly with next batter about pitcher and there is no hold up.
- Pitcher throws several bad pitches in a row and fielder approaches to calm them down without violating time between pitches.
- Video review protocol requires the defensive team to maintain their position on the field but the reality is that there will be some degree of communication between fielders at close range.

Umpires should ask themselves is this meeting the reason why we are stopping the game. If the answer is yes, we have a charged conference. For an excessive player-to-player or team representative-to-player conference, the player or coach who initiated the conference is ejected.