



March 2019 Plays and Clarifications

National Umpire Schools:

We have completed four very successful National Umpire Schools this year. Regrettably mother nature made us cancel the fifth school that was to be in Smithfield, R.I. The forecast of up to 7 inches of snow in a very short period caused all facilities set up to host the school to close and we were not allowed to use them.

We have three schools yet to be held, Douglas, Wyo. April 12-14, Holland, Mich. April 12-14 and Bismarck, N.D. April 26-28. If you have been unable to attend any of the past schools and still want to attend, these three schools offer an excellent opportunity to be trained in the best mechanics in Softball.

Fast Pitch Camp:

We still have openings in the Fast Pitch Camp to be held in Cincinnati, Ohio from June 19-22. This camp is an opportunity to learn some USA Softball mechanics in an advanced atmosphere. You will not only learn the mechanics but the reasons why we have them. We ask that if you want to attend, let your State or Metro UIC know so they can lead you in making the decision, **"Am I ready for an advanced Fast Pitch Camp"**. By design, this camp could be tough for an umpire early in their career to follow as it is designed for the umpire that really wants to take their umpire career to another level.

SafeSport

Just a reminder for those of you that have been/will be selected for our National Championships this season or those of you who are working Championship play in your Local Associations, you must be SafeSport Certified with the appropriate certificates to validate your certification. If you took the SafeSport course for 2018, you will need to take the SafeSport refresher course this season. If you haven't taken the course yet, you will need to achieve the certification at the time of turning in your contract for the National Championship or working a Local Association Championship.

2019 Umpire Manual

USA Softball loves to hear how much our umpires want to learn and continue to improve. We are seeing that umpires are not utilizing our improved, updated and easy access Umpire Manual. The last printed manual in 2016 is outdated. The updated umpire manual (<https://www.teamusa.org/USA-Softball/Umpires/Umpire-Manual>) is now downloadable, can be printed in multiple sizes and font, has over 100 diagrams and 90 playable videos to add to your learning and teaching experience. It is important that all USA Softball umpires reference the updated manual yearly as it has additional tools to assist our umpires in being the best they can be at the local and national level.

Access it here: <https://www.teamusa.org/USA-Softball/Umpires/Umpire-Manual>

USA SOFTBALL UMPIRE MEDALS PROGRAM

We want to highlight the many award programs that USA Softball Umpires can join. The Medals program is one that allows all umpires to be recognized whether they umpire league softball or work National Championship Play. There are four levels of achievement: Blue, Bronze, Silver and Gold. Qualifications for each level are based on, (1) Years of service as a registered USA Softball Umpire, (2) Being in good standing with your Local Association, and other achievements compiled while umpiring USA Softball. You can see the requirements for each level of the program by going to USASoftball.com, clicking on umpires, then clicking on Umpire Awards. From there, scroll down and click on Medals program and then the application form. These qualifications are listed on page two (2) of the application.

The cost of applying for each level is \$25.00. In return you will receive a Medals Ball Cap with the level you have achieved shown on the Cap. You will also receive a medals pin and a certificate. In addition, your name will be listed in a kiosk in the National Softball Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City.

For more information on how the program is administered in your area, contact your Local Association Umpire-In-Chief.

Fast Pitch Pitching Rule:

We often receive questions on the pitching rule for fast pitch pitchers. These questions range from how long the hands must come together, whether the foot can be off the ground, the foot placement and movement of the foot on the pitcher's plate. The question of the foot on the pitcher's plate is what we would like to discuss in this posting:

One pitching style is for the pitcher to start with their pivot foot near the back of the pitching plate and move that foot forward as they start their pitching motion maintaining contact with the pitching plate prior to the step. Another pitcher may put a little bit of the pivot foot on the top of the pitcher's plate and move forward as they start the pitching motion maintaining contact with the pitcher's plate until the step forward. Another will place the heel of the pivot foot against the front of pitcher's plate and maintain contact with the pitcher's plate prior to the forward step. Once the non-pivot foot is moved forward the pitcher may roll their pivot foot or come up on the ball of the pivot foot essentially losing contact with the pitcher's plate but keeping their original foot position prior to the step forward by the non-pivot foot. All of these are legal in USA Softball. The biggest question comes up when they place their pivot foot against the front of the pitcher's plate and do not slide the foot forward and they are still considered to have pushed from the pitcher's plate. The broad answer is yes, if they do not slide the foot forward and maintain the original foot position they started with.

There are pitching motions that have the pitcher start with the heel of the pivot foot against the pitcher's plate. Then without sliding their pivot forward or backwards, they roll onto the ball of their pivot foot and push off the ground in front of the pitcher's plate. This motion is legal and

within the USA Softball Rules. The pitcher started the pitch, in this case a female pitcher, with both feet in contact with the pitcher's plate, Rule 6A Section 1C2. The pitcher brought their hands together once and separated them to start the pitch, Rule 6A Section 2. The pitcher takes one step with the non-pivot foot forward, Rule 6A Section 3I. The question now comes in, is pushing from the ground violate Rule 6A, Section 3I Pushing off with the pivot foot from a place other than the pitcher's plate is illegal.

The intent of this section of the rule is that the pitcher does not slide or step forward to a point where their foot could no longer touch the pitching plate prior to the start of the pitch, thus creating a different starting position from the original foot position. When we watch pitcher's pitch, very seldom do any actually push from the pitcher plate. They push from the ground regardless of where the foot started on the pitcher's plate. Even though a pitcher may raise to the ball of their foot or turn their foot to push from the ball of their foot, their original foot position (distance from the pitching plate) remained the same and this pitching motion is legal.

Could the wording of our rule be a little better, possibly, but if we understand the intent of the rule and the pitching motion, applying our book of rules makes sense. As long as a pitcher maintains contact with the pitcher's plate through the start of the pitch and does not slide or step forward maintaining the original foot position, the pitcher is legal.