

Softball Rule Myths

ASA Rules

Compiled by Joel

Here is the Text version of the SB rule myths I published on eteamz Fastpitch Board. (It is in Microsoft Word Format) I have modified them from Jim Booth's Baseball Rule Myth's to be compatible with ASA softball.

I take no credit for this other than compiling them, writing the commentary and referencing the proper references in the 2001 ASA rule-book. The myths were originally posted by Jim Booth (eteamz baseball rules expert) and the rules were written by ASA - who gives the clearest rule writing of all the bodies of FP softball (in my opinion). Credit also needs to go to the many umpires on the message boards who have helped me in my quest to become a better umpire.....

Most notably.....Steve Michell, Mike Rowe, Sam Carter, Tom McCarville, Roger Greene, Jim Todd, Bob (bluezebra), Dakota, Ken Miller, Ed (from McGriffs), Casey from KC, Don (from Big D).....and the other hundreds of umpires (both BB and SB) who love to pick apart rules. If I have forgotten anyone.....apologies up-front.

Without further ado.....

The hands are considered part of the bat. One of the greatest rule myths and I am sure that Jim Booth put this on the top for this reason. If a batter is hit with a pitch on the hands, it is simply a dead ball and the batter is awarded first base. Remember that anytime a batter is hit, it is ALWAYS a dead ball. If the batter is swinging and the ball contacts her hands first, we have a DEAD BALL/ STRIKE. If the ball contacts the batter in the strike zone...same result - if it is the third strike in either of these cases - the batter is out. See ASA 7-4-G through I, and 8-1-F

The batter-runner must turn to his right after over-running first base. The runner is protected back to first base regardless of which way they turn as long as they don't make an attempt of feint towards second base (umpire judgement). Merely turning to the left does NOT put the runner in jeopardy of being tagged out unless they make an attempt to advance to 2nd. See ASA 8-8-H and 8-8-T. Also ASA POE#32

If the batter breaks his wrists when swinging, it's a strike. The umpire's first priority on this play is (a) was the pitch in the strike zone...if so, it is merely a strike. If not, the umpire must then judge did the batter attempt to hit the ball (did she offer at it). If in the umpire's judgement, she offered, then the umpire should rule a strike. Coaches, remember that sometimes catchers stand up and block our view, if we don't see a swing and the ball is out of the strike zone...we are calling a ball. If asked by the catcher or pitcher, most umpires will check with their field partner. If I was blocked and not sure...I will usually ask my partner without an appeal. See ASA POE#9 and ASA Umpire Manual - Check Swing Situation Page 206.

If a batted ball hits the plate first it's a foul ball. Home plate is in fair territory and a ball that first hits the plate it is fair/foul based upon where it settles or is first touched...not by where it first hit the ground. See ASA Definitions - Fair Ball/Fair Territory/Foul Ball in Rule 1.

The batter cannot be called out for interference if he is in the batter's box. A batter is

safest from being called for interference by staying in the batters box and doing nothing out of the ordinary (or intentionally interfering with a throw by the catcher) UNLESS there is a play at the plate. When there is a play at the plate the batter must vacate any space necessary for the fielders to make a play. See ASA POE #28-B.

The ball is dead on a foul-tip. The term Foul tip is often used incorrectly to denote any pitched ball that is hit sharply off the batter's bat in foul territory. The definition of a foul tip is a ball that is hit and goes "sharp and direct" from the bat to the catcher's glove and is caught in flight. There are some intricacies that I will not go into here, but a true foul tip remains alive and runners are free to advance at their own risk. If the foul tip is strike three, the batter is out and the ball remains alive. See ASA Rule 1 Definitions - Foul Tip and Rule 7-4-D.

The batter may not switch batter's boxes after two strikes. The batter may switch at any time in the count as long as she does not switch sides once the pitcher is on the rubber taking her signs. See ASA 7-3-D

The batter who batted out of order is the person declared out. The batter who should have been at bat is the person declared out. Example: Able, Baker, Charlie due up. Baker bats in the place of Able and gets a base hit. Charlie then comes to the plate. The defensive manager calls time and points out to the PU (plate umpire) that Baker batted out of turn before the next batter receives a pitch. The PU will then declare Able out, remove Baker from the bases and it is now Baker's time at bat again. Once Charlie receives a pitch (legal or illegal) Baker's time at bat is now legitimized, making Charlie the correct batter. Able will now have to wait until her next time to get to bat again. This one can get very complicated when you have multiple batters go out of order. See ASA 7-2-A through E.

9. The batter may not overrun first base when he gets a base-on-balls. The batter may overrun first but may be in jeopardy to be put out by either a tag by the first baseman if she makes an attempt to advance to 2nd base after she has passed 1st or if she is guilty by the "Lookback rule" Please read POE #29. This is a very misunderstood rule. Here is a very basic breakdown of the rule. The runner may continue to run the bases while the pitcher has the ball in the circle (even though the pitcher may not be making a play) and she can stop ONCE to find the ball.....once she has stopped, she must IMMEDIATELY decide to either (1) advance or (2) return. The only caveat about the stop made by the runner is that once they have stopped ON a base.....they may not continue.....they are pretty much tied to the base. If she jukes at all during this stop.....she is out. If she lingers too long during the stop.....she is out (I give the one-one thousand count....after that.....BANG. She must commit to either advancing or retreating. Look also in ASA 8-8-H and 8-8-T.

10. The batter is out if he starts for the dugout before going to first after a dropped third strike. In ASA a batter is only declared out when leaving the baseline to avoid a tag or if they have entered their team area (dugout). Simply not advancing to first base does not make the batter out. Example: Batter swings for 3rd strike with nobody on base and the catcher drops the ball. Batter gets about ½ way toward her dugout and realizing that it was a "not caught third strike" situation runs directly to 1st base before she is tagged by

the catcher or F2 throws to F3 for the out. This is LEGAL...the batter would not be declared out by the umpire until she entered her "team area". See ASA 8-2-D

11. If the batter does not pull the bat out of the strike zone while in the bunting position, it's an automatic strike. Merely leaving the bat over the plate would not be considered a strike. The batter must "offer" at the pitch. The batter is not required to pull the bat back.....when I am PU, I look for twitches or other movement of the bat towards the ball to determine whether the batter offered at the pitch or not. See ASA POE #9.

The batter is out if a bunted ball hits the ground and bounces back up and hits the bat while the batter is holding the bat. A batter who is hit by their own batted ball while still in the batters box is considered to be a foul ball.....if the ball bounces up and hits the bat (while the batter is still in the batters box) the result is the same. See ASA POE #22

The batter is out if his foot touches the plate. NOT a myth in Softball. If the batter contacts the ball (either fair or foul) while one foot is wholly outside the lines of the batters box or is in contact with home plate.....the batter is out. ASA 7-6-(D-F) and POE #7.

The batter-runner is always out if he runs outside the running lane after a bunted ball. The batter-runner is only out if in the judgement of the umpire, she interfered with the fielder taking the throw at first base. If the pitcher or catcher makes a horrible throw and the BR is outside the lane, it will not likely be called interference. The ball must be thrown for interference to be called also. See ASA 8-2-E

A runner is out if he slaps hands or high-fives other players, after a homerun is hit over the fence. A runner is only out if a player (who is not a runner) or coach physically assists a player in running the bases. As you can imagine, a high-five could not be judged as physically assisting. See ASA 8-8-E

Tie goes to the runner. Every umpire is taught: either the runner beat the throw, or the throw beat the runner. Every now and then, you might have a play, that is just so close it is difficult to make a decision. In the back of my mind is always the question...."Who made this play too close to call? If F5 makes a spectacular back-hand stab and fires and the ball and the runner get there at the same time.....give the out to the defense.....they earned it. If F4 bobbles and drops an easy grounder.....give the benefit to the runner. In the hundreds of games that I have called, I can only think of a few times I have used this because almost always, no matter how close, either the ball beat the runner or it didn't.....

The runner gets the base he's going to, plus one on a ball thrown out-of-play. The 1+1 is an old myth that I still get every now and then...example: batter singles and has rounded first and sees F7 make a great stop and starts back towards 1st when F7 uncorks a horrible throw that sails into the bleachers. We have a 2 base award from the time the ball left the fielders hand that administered from the last legally held base that each runner had at the time of the throw. Some believe that since the batter was heading back to first...that she is awarded the base she was heading to (1st) and 1 base.....so she would wind up on 2nd. The proper award would be 3rd base. See ASA 8-6-G

Anytime a coach touches a runner, the runner is out. See rule myth #15.

Runners may never run the bases in reverse order. A runner is entitled to run the bases in reverse order (and sometimes required) when back tracking to tag up on a caught

fly ball. Example...speedy runner on first and she is off at the crack of the bat...the ball is hit to DEEP center...the runner is already past third when the ball is caught...she MUST now run the bases in reverse order to safely get back to 1st. She may NOT cut across the diamond but MUST retouch the bases in the reverse order she touched them advancing. See ASA 8-3-A

The runner must always slide when the play is close. The runner must avoid a fielder who has the ball when waiting to make a play. She does not have to slide. She may slide into the fielder, attempt to run around the fielder (and possibly be called out for runner out of the 3' baseline), she may run back to the last legally held base, in ASA she may attempt to jump over the fielder, or she can simply give up. If in the umpires judgement the ball the fielder and the runner all converge on the same place at the same time...it is simply a wreck...neither interference nor obstruction. See ASA POE #13 Note: Any league that institutes a MUST slide rule is looking for problems.....a good Lawyer will turn your league into hamburger meat for creating a rule such as this.

The runner is always safe when hit by a batted ball while touching a base. CREDIT Sam Carter with the best explanation of this one. "A runner is not out when struck by an infield fly (or any fly ball) if she is touching the base unless she intentionally interferes with a fielder trying to catch a ball." See ASA POE #39-A

A runner may not steal on a foul-tip. The ball is live on a foul tip. Runners may steal because the ball is alive. A foul tip is a ball that goes sharp and direct to the catchers glove and is caught. A sharply hit foul ball that does not meet this definition, is just that, a FOUL BALL. See ASA Rule 1 - Definitions (Foul Tip), and ASA 7-4-D

It is a force out when a runner is called out for not tagging up on a fly ball. Failing to retouch is not a force. If a runner is called out for the 3rd out on appeal for not retouching (tagging up), any preceding runs score unless the appeal is made before they cross the plate. See ASA Rule 1 - Definitions (Force Out), and ASA POE #1 Appeals - J & K.

An appeal on a runner who missed a base cannot be a force out. A runner who misses a base they were forced to and it is properly appealed for the 3rd out, can nullify any runs that score. See ASA POE #1 Appeals - J.

A runner is out if he runs out of the baseline to avoid a fielder who is fielding a batted ball. A runner is declared out for running out of the baseline ONLY if she is avoiding a tag by a fielder with the ball. See ASA 8-8-A and 8-9-A.

Runners may not advance when an infield fly is called. Runners may advance with the risk of being tagged while off their base, and being called out on appeal for leaving a base too soon (if the IF (Infield Fly) is caught). The runners ARE NOT forced to advance if the IF is dropped. See ASA Rule 1 - Definitions (Infield Fly) and ASA 8-2-I.

No run can score when a runner is called out for the third out for not tagging up. This is a time play...opposite of Rule Myth #23 and is answered in Rule Myth #22. See ASA POE#1-K

A pitch that bounces to the plate cannot be hit. Probably from Slow pitch softball, where the ball becomes dead when it touches the ground. In FP, the ball remains alive when it hits the ground and may be hit by the batter.

The batter does not get first base if hit by a pitch after it bounces. A batter is entitled to 1st base if hit by a pitch even though it hit the ground first (unless they made no effort

to get out of the way). See ASA 8-1-F

If a fielder holds a fly ball for 2 seconds it's a catch. Ray answered this one, so I will paste his answer here. "The umpire will need to determine if, in his judgment, the fielder had held the ball long enough to prove complete control (quoting the ASA rule). The ASA rule also states It is not a catch, if a fielder, collides with another player, umpire or a fence, or falls to the ground and drops the ball as a result of the collision or falling to the ground (voluntary release). There is no mention of time here. The myth in #30 is that there is a time test. There isn't." See ASA - Rule 1 Definitions (Catch).

You must tag the base with your foot on a force out or appeal. Any portion of the fielders body may be made when tagging a bag on a force out. Even if the fielder has the ball in her hand and touches the base with her empty glove...this would be an out. See ASA 8-8-C.

The ball is always immediately dead on a illegal pitch. This is a delayed dead ball. If the batter hits the pitch the batter (and all runners) advance at least one base, the illegal pitch is ignored.. If the batter hits the ball but the criteria to nullify the illegal pitch is not met, the offended coach may take the result of the play or the penalty for the illegal pitch (a ball on the batter and all runners are advanced one base) See ASA 6-(1-8) EFFECT.

If a player's feet are in fair territory when the ball is touched, it is a fair ball. It is he position of the BALL which determines whether it is fair or foul...NOT the position of the fielder. See definition section.....fair or foul ball.

The ball must always be returned to the pitcher before an appeal can be made. In most softball governing bodies, appeals may either be made during live ball situation - i.e. - tagging a base that a runner failed to tag up, touching a base that a runner missed (with a request to the umpire that is what the defense is appealing), tagging the runner for a base running infraction are all live ball appeals.

The defense may also make an appeal on a runner after play is stopped on any base running infraction. This is done by any infielder requesting to the proper umpire that they are appealing the infraction. The umpire would then rule on the appeal. The ASA POE#1 - Appeals gives a great explanation on how to make a proper live or dead ball appeal. NOTE: This past weekend, I umpired a game in which the coach after the inning was over commented that one of the offensive players from the home team missed first base. I explained to him that I saw the infraction, but could not act on it unless one of his girls appealed the miss of first (it could have save his team two runs). He said he was not sure how to begin an appeal so he kept silent. Learn the rules and you give yourself and your girls a better chance at winning.

The pitcher's hand may not pass her hip twice. Rays suggestion to the myths along with his answer. The pitching rules essentially allow for 1 time past the hips in the BACKWARD direction and NOT MORE THAN TWICE in the forward direction. A related myth is that the so called "California" or "Chinese" changeup is legal. This is a pitch where the pitcher releases the ball and makes an additional arm circle after release. No revolution following release is allowed and this is interpreted to mean nothing beyond reasonable follow-through. See ASA 6-3-D

The pitcher's foot must remain in contact with the pitching plate until release.

Another suggestion by Ray for softball rule myths with his answer. The pitcher's PIVOT foot (right for RHP, left for LHP), must remain in contact with the ground; it may push off and drag away from the pitcher's plate but not from any other place. See ASA 6-3-I

If a fielder catches a fly ball and then falls over the fence it is a homerun. This is just a catch and an out. If the fielder completely enters dead ball territory over the fence, all runners are awarded 1 base (unless the catch is the 3rd out). See ASA Rule 1 Catch and ASA 8-6-K

The ball is dead anytime an umpire is hit by the ball. On a 60' diamond, it is almost impossible for an umpire to interfere with a batted ball. The only way interference would be ruled is if the umpire was struck with a batted ball BEFORE it passed an infielder (other than the pitcher). Since softball umpires work behind the infield - this scenario is unlikely. If an umpire is hit with a batted ball after it has passed an infielder or struck with any thrown ball, the ball remains alive and in play. See ASA 8-1-E and 10-8-E.

The home plate umpire can overrule the other umps at anytime. NO umpire has the authority to set aside or question decisions made by another umpire within the limits of the respective duties as outlined in the rules. Read all of ASA rule 10.

It is illegal for two base runners to occupy the same base. Two runners may occupy the same base, but one of them is in jeopardy of being put out. If a runner is forced to advance to the next base....the lead runner would be out if tagged. If the lead runner is not forced....she "owns" the base and the trail runner would be out if tagged.