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## CCSUA-South Training Program Update

The objective of the CCSUA-South training program is to provide a high-quality instructional program for the development, training, and continual improvement of collegiate softball umpires and to work with the college softball assigners in that role.

The major elements of this program include recruiting and training new college umpires, Fall Clinics, Fall observations dates, Pre-season Camp, updates to college rules/mechanics/issues during the Annual meeting, Roundtables, in-season observation/evaluations, our mentoring program and Newsletters.

### Umpire Development Program

For the last 2 years we have invited veteran college umpires to the Fall clinic, Fall observation dates and Camp. All college conferences are demanding that college softball umpires stay current to the game, be in top physical shape, and regularly attend camps to improve. We have rotated more than half of our veteran umpires through this once-every-three-years rotation. If you have not been included, you can expect to be invited for next year's rotation, starting with the Fall Clinic in September.

One of the positive outcomes of our training program has been the development of very strong "new" college umpires - graduates of the last 4 years of the training program. These umpires have learned and embedded the philosophies of the SUP into their game. They have seriously studied the college rules, bought and studied the CCA manual, continually asked for and received mentoring, observations and evaluations, taken notes during their post-games and work on everything they are told.

### Attention veteran umpires!

This is a wake-up call to our veterans. Are you going to off-season Camps? Are you studying the Rule book and CCA manual at least once a week? Are you asking your partners to observe you and give you a good post-game? Are you staying in the best possible physical shape so you can keep up with the ever-increasing athleticism of the college softball athlete? Are you as ready as you can be for the 2012 season?

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## Mechanics Corner

### CCA Manual/Updates

The CCA Manual is available for purchase if have not done so yet; this book is a vital part of being a college umpire. The entire 2-ump section has been moved to the SUP Central Hub - go to the Home Plate page, on the right side under the heading General Umpiring Info click on Articles and Instruction. This will take you to the page with the link Two-Umpire System.

### Administering option plays

There is a recent update to administering option plays. There is a link to this on the Home Plate page. Read this carefully and be ready to handle it properly on the field.

### Point-of-the plate position in the 2-umpire system

There has been some confusion regarding the point-of-the-plate position (POP) for the plate umpire preparing for a call on a runner advancing to the plate. This position can often be used in the 3-umpire system when nobody chases. In the 2-umpire system the plate umpire is responsible for the lead runner at 3b so he/she must move to the holding zone on most plays; this precludes the PU from being able to use the point-of-the-plate position most of the time. It is, however, a good starting position if the play allows you to do it without sacrificing the possible play at 3b. But do not use "I went to the POP" as a reason for staying close to the plate when you have responsibilities at 3b.

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## Are you going Bat(ty) yet?!

Carefully checking all bats before every game is an absolute must. The teams should be playing by the rules; and more importantly this is a safety and liability issue. The first few weeks of the season have been a challenge. Here is a suggestion. If a team has a lot of bats pull them out of the bat rack one at a time, line them up against the fence in alphabetical order by manufacturer; now you can check the bats against their highlighted bat list more efficiently.

We are finding some teams bringing back bats for a following game after they have been removed from a previous game ("because we paid a lot of money for them"). The plate umpire must fill out a Game Report for every game in which bats were removed. We have one team which is still struggling to provide the proper bat list!

Here is a list of bat issues we have encountered so far (from Game Reports):

LA Harbor College: found 1 bat (SRV4B) not listed on the 1/15/2012 approved bat list The bat list they were using was from **March of 2011**. We told the coach that he needs to download an updated bat list. **2<sup>nd</sup> time wrong bat list.** LA Harbor presented May 2011 bat list. Two bats were pulled from LA Harbor's dugout: Easton SCN6B (white) and Easton SSR1B (green). Bats removed from game were held at the score keeper/announcer's table during the contest. Third strike and you're out?? The SCN6B bat showed up again in a recent game.

Santa Ana coach did not bring her bat list (forgotten at the school). We had to use a copy of the complete list which Saddleback had available.

Watch for old bats...In the bottom of the first inning Saddleback player #5 hit a foul ball and the sound of the bat hitting the ball sounded unusual. Plate umpire checked the bat and it had an audible rattle. We removed the bat from play and secured it in site of the umpires at the scorekeeper's table.

Golden West Tournament The tournament director wants to check the bats and put stickers on them. You have to check the bats. The stickers are only if a bat is bat-tested on site with a machine.

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## Illegal Pitches are still happening

### **This rule has not changed**

Stay with this call if you see it. We are calling a lot less illegal pitches but they are still out there! You must stay vigilant from first pitch to last pitch.

We have had a few incidents where the pitcher was borderline legal ("hmm") for the first few innings. As she got tired she went from borderline to illegal ("wow"). The umpire was vigilant and called it. The coach came out to complain "how can you call that now when you haven't called an illegal pitch yet this game." Note: he did not argue that the pitch was not illegal.

The umpire made the right response. After using rule book language to explain what was illegal, he stated that it does not matter where in the game it is called, he would call it anytime it happened.

### **Are you missing these illegal actions?**

The pitcher may not step onto the plate with the hands together, nor can she immediately bring her hands together as she is stepping onto the plate. She may not take or simulate taking the signal from the catcher with her hands together. Infractions to any of these rules result in an illegal pitch.

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## Rules Corner

There have been some changes in the 2012-2013 Rule Book which are not listed in the Major Rule Changes page, but which still have an impact on the game, and in one case, actually does constitute a rule change.

- Conferences 6.11. This rule has been rewritten and has new wording in many places; be sure you read all of 6.11 thoroughly.
- Fielder obstruction 9.4.2. New section 9.4.2.2 - interesting; did a fielder try to create a foul ball by blowing on the rolling ball last year?
- Color of lines and bases 2.4, 2.15, 2.20. With the trend toward the color pink for honorable reasons, we need to understand what parts of the field must remain white - bases, home plate, pitcher's plate, all lines. And then just when we think we understand, we get an interpretation that the rise (height) part of the base may be hand-painted pink leaving the top portion entirely white (page 5 of the recent interpretations).

- Positions of offense during pitching change 6.4.4.3. New section - base runner(s) who are on base before a pitching change may lead off during the pitching warm-ups.
  - Retired batter interference 11.22.3. I would call this an unannounced rule change, not a Common Practices Update (page 12). Look at last year's book (11.22.2.Effect.Exception 2). The Effect was changed from the *runner being played on* is out to *the runner closest to home* is out.
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## Game Management

We try to call time-out during a game as infrequently as possible. But if you do call time-out, make sure your partners know. The best way to accomplish this is to give a strong verbal while making eye contact with your partner(s).

We had an incident in during which an umpire called time-out but nobody knew it but him. Then a runner was called out for leaving her base. After too much confusion and a long huddle, the crew determined that time was out and the runner would be returned to her base. So they announced it without bringing the coaches together to explain the situation. You know what happened next. The defensive coach comes out for a long argument.

Good game management would have eliminated this situation completely. When you call time-out, call it loudly and make sure everybody knows. Good game management would have resolved the issue a lot quicker - when you have made a decision on a controversial play, bring both coaches together to explain the what your decision is and why.

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## Recent Rules Interpretations

There are a large number of rule interpretations for 2012. Go to the SUP Central Hub to get these.