

CHAPTER 14—SOFTBALL REGULATIONS

1. Playing Season Policies.

a. Championship Determination.

The team with the highest won-lost percentage during Conference play shall be the Conference champion and shall represent the Conference in the NCAA Division I Softball Championship. If that percentage is shared by more than one team, a co-championship shall exist. (6/92)

(1) Championship Ties.

In the event of a percentage tie for the Conference championship, the following procedure shall be used to determine the Conference's automatic qualifier for the NCAA Division I Softball Championship. (6/92, 10/01)

(a) The regular-season Conference record of each of the tied teams against the other team(s) with which it is tied shall be determined. The team with the best record in this competition shall participate as the Conference's automatic qualifier for the NCAA Division I Softball Championship. If a team is eliminated as a result of this procedure and a tie still exists, this procedure shall be reapplied to the remaining tied teams. (10/01, 10/02)

(b) If a tie still exists, the tied teams' record in regular-season Conference play against the next highest placed team(s) in the Conference standings shall be determined, including any team(s) already eliminated through the tie-breaking procedure. This procedure shall continue through an evaluation of competitive records of the tied teams against all teams in the Conference in the order of their placement in the standings until the tie is broken. In the event of a tie among two or more teams lower in the standings when comparing records, each team's combined record against the two or more tied teams shall be determined. If a tied team is eliminated as a result of this procedure and a tie still exists, the tie-breaking procedure shall revert to step (a) above. (10/01, 10/02)

(c) If a tie still exists, then the Conference's automatic qualifier for the NCAA Division I Softball Championship shall be determined by a coin flip conducted by the Commissioner. (10/01)

b. Conference Schedule.

Each Conference team shall schedule one three-game series against every other team. The season shall last nine weeks, with one team having a bye each week. All three games of a given series shall be played at the home site of one of the teams. Games shall be scheduled on Friday-Saturday-Sunday, except (1) games scheduled on Easter Weekend and during the final week of the season shall be played on Thursday-Friday-Saturday, and (2) the opening series for quarter institutions completing final exams that are scheduled away from home shall be played on Saturday-Sunday-Monday to lessen interference with final examinations. Traditional rival games shall be placed randomly in the schedule. Non-Conference games shall be scheduled following the completion of Conference scheduling. (6/87, 6/92, 12/92, 6/94, 5/97, 2/99, 6/02, 6/04, 6/09, 10/10, 10/12, 8/13)

(1) Rescheduling Policies.

If a game is postponed for any reason, it shall be rescheduled as follows: (6/88, 6/92, 12/92, 1/93, 12/93, 12/95, 6/00, 10/09)

(a) If a game is postponed the first or second day of a series and cannot be played on its scheduled day, the game shall be rescheduled as part of a doubleheader the next day. No more than two games shall be played on any one day. Completion of a halted game counts as one of the two games allowed on any given day. (10/09, 10/10, 10/12)

(b) For the first or second game of a series, any suspended game may not resume later than 11:00 p.m. that day, and no new inning may begin after midnight. Any inning in progress shall be completed. When the applicable time limit is reached, the game will be called and considered a regulation game if legal by rule. If not legal by rule, and followed by a game the next day, it will be declared a halted game and completed the next day. Games which are not regulation games and cannot be completed on subsequent days shall be declared "no game" and will not be rescheduled. (10/09, 10/10)

(c) If the third game of a series is suspended and is not a regulation game by rule, it shall be declared "no game" and will not be rescheduled. (10/09)

(d) Any game which is postponed shall not begin after 9:00 p.m. (10/10)

(e) Any suspended game that is part of a doubleheader which is legal by rule will be considered a regulation game. (10/12)

2. Game Policies.

a. Bat Testing.

All bats to be used in a Conference series shall undergo barrel compression testing using the NCAA bat-testing protocol prior to the first game of each series. The testing must be done by an institutional administrator of the host team at least two hours and 15 minutes prior to game time for the home team, and at least two hours before game time for the visiting team. Bats which pass the test will have a sticker affixed to them on the taper; bats which fail the test will be confiscated by the administrator and sent to the Conference office to be forwarded to the NCAA per the established NCAA protocol. In the event of machine failure or malfunction, testing will be suspended for that series. (10/11, 10/12)

b. Competition Site.

All Conference games are to be played on the field of the scheduled home team, except by mutual agreement of the appropriate athletics department administrators. When, because of extenuating circumstances, a substitute home field is required, the appropriate athletics department administrator of the home team is required to notify all affected teams at least five days in advance of the scheduled games.

The competition site must include a dirt infield, minimum NCAA distance requirements, and a safe seating area for both teams. If these requirements cannot be met, the game shall be rescheduled. The playing field must meet minimum NCAA specifications and its infield must be dragged between games of a doubleheader. The competition site must include dugouts separated from spectator seating areas, a visible scoreboard, and a restroom in close proximity to the playing field. The use of infield tarps shall be required. (12/90, 6/93, 10/08)

c. Electronic Devices.

All electronic devices, with the exception of a mobile phone which may be used only by the team trainer, must be turned off during games. Umpires shall warn the head coach of the offending team upon the first instance of a violation of this rule. Subsequent violations shall result in the ejection of the head coach. (10/12)

d. Game Times.

For non-televised games, the home team shall establish the game times for the first two games of a Conference series, with the game on the final day to start no later than noon. Game times for non-televised games may be changed by mutual consent of the participating coaches. Game times for televised games shall be established by the Conference office. (6/00, 6/04, 10/00, 10/01, 10/03, 10/04, 10/07, 10/09, 10/11, 12/13)

e. Playing Rules.

Contests shall be conducted under the NCAA Softball Rules except as modified below. (6/92, 6/98)

(1) Ball Rotation.

There will be no ball rotation between innings or after foul balls. The pitcher shall have a choice of ball as long as there is no prolonged delay of action. (3/87)

(2) Forfeit Time.

There shall be no Conference forfeit time. A game which does not begin within 45 minutes of its scheduled starting time requires rescheduling of the game. All efforts shall be made to reschedule on the same or following day. (3/87, 6/92)

(3) Ground Rules.

Ground rules shall be provided in writing by the host institution to the plate umpire to allow the umpire to review them with representatives of both teams during the pregame meeting. (6/01)

(4) Inclement Weather.

Inclement weather shall include a temperature that has dropped below 32 degrees Fahrenheit (or wind chill of 25 degrees Fahrenheit). Internet resources providing weather information shall be made available by the host institution. (10/11)

(5) Intermission.

The umpires and coaches of the competing teams shall mutually agree upon the length of the intermission between games of a doubleheader. The intermission shall last from 15-30 minutes. (6/92)

(6) Official Ball.

The official ball used for all Conference contests shall be the official ball used for NCAA championships. The host institution shall provide a minimum of 18 game-worthy balls for play and two new game balls for warm-up for the visiting team. (3/87, 6/89, 11/05, 10/08, 2/17)

(7) Official Scorer.

The host institution shall provide a well-trained and knowledgeable scorekeeper for all home Conference games. A current rule book and National Softball Coaches Association Scoring Manual shall be available at the scorer's table which shall be stationed away from both teams and close to the plate umpire. The official scorebook shall provide the records that shall be used by both teams in the compilation of statistics. A copy of the NCAA Box Score Form for both games of a doubleheader shall be provided to the visiting team at the conclusion of the second game. (6/88, 6/92)

(8) Protests.

All protests shall be handled in accordance with NCAA Softball Playing Rules. If a protest from a Conference game is upheld, the game shall be declared "no contest" and will not be rescheduled to be replayed from the point of the protest. (6/92, 5/09, 10/09)

(9) Tiebreaker.

The tiebreaker rule shall not be used. (10/00)

(10)Time Limit.

For non-televised softball games played on a day when the visiting team is traveling by commercial airline, a time limit shall be implemented of three-and-one-half hours from the start of the game or four hours before the scheduled flight time, whichever is later, with no new inning beginning after the time limit has been reached. Any inning in progress shall be completed. If a regulation game (per NCAA rules) has been played when the time limit is reached, it shall be declared a regulation game. Institutions may mutually agree to extend the time limit to complete the game. Games which are not regulation games by rule shall be declared “no contest”. There shall be no time limit on televised games. (10/06, 10/09, 12/13)

(11)Uniforms.

The host team shall wear light uniforms and the traveling team shall wear dark uniforms for the first and third games of the series and the home team shall wear dark and the visiting team shall wear light for the second game. Uniform color changes may be made by mutual agreement of the coaches of the competing teams as long as the uniform colors contrast. (6/88, 5/90, 6/92, 6/12, 2/17)

f. Pregame Warm-Up.

Field preparation, which includes dragging, drawing of lines and first watering, shall be completed two hours prior to game time. The visiting team shall be provided with the following: four soft toss areas protected by soft nets; two batting cages with protective screens; one bucket of softballs and a batting tee in each batting cage; either one bucket of softballs or one bucket of dimpled balls in each of the soft net areas; and two buckets of warm-up balls in the dugout. (10/04, 10/08)

The home coach will specify whether hitting is done on the field, in the cages, or both, and whether hitting time is shared or exclusive to each team. Each head coach must provide the Conference office with the hitting format prior to the season; once established, the format may be changed only by mutual consent of the head coaches, unless weather conditions preclude on-field hitting. (2/17)

On days when classes are in session, the home coach will specify if the home or visitor will hit first, with notification to the visitors a minimum of one week earlier. When classes are not in session, the home team will hit first. (2/17)

Pre-game Format: If batting practice is held only in the batting cages.

Time to

First Pitch Action

2:05	Team A - Batting Practice/Visiting Team Stretch and Warm-Up (40 mins)
1:25	Team B - Batting Practice/Home Team Stretch and Warm-Up (40 mins)
0:45	Open warm-up/shared field (10 minutes)
0:35	Home Team Pre-game Infield Warm-up (7 minutes)
0:28	Visiting Team Pre-game Infield Warm-up (7 minutes)
0:21	Field preparation (mandatory dragging of infield and redrawing of lines as necessary) (10 mins.)
0:11	Meeting with umpires (4 minutes)
0:07	National Anthem, Introductions

(6/88, 10/00, 10/04, 10/05, 10/09, 10/12, 12/14, 2/17)

Pre-game Format: If batting practice is held on the field (and cages) and field conditions permitting..

Time to

First Pitch Action

2:25	Team A - Batting Practice/Visiting Team Stretch and Warm-Up (40 mins)
1:45	Change-over on Field (5 minutes)
1:40	Team B - Batting Practice/Home Team Stretch and Warm-Up (40 mins)
1:00	Open warm-up/ shared field (25 minutes)
0:35	Home Team Pre-game Infield Warm-up (7 minutes)
0:28	Visiting Team Pre-game Infield Warm-up (7 minutes)
0:21	Field preparation (mandatory dragging of infield and redrawing of lines as necessary) (6 mins.)
0:11	Meeting with umpires (4 minutes)
0:07	National Anthem, Introductions
(6/88, 10/00, 10/04, 10/05, 10/09, 10/12, 12/14, 2/17)	

g. Public Address Announcer.

The public address announcer shall be in place 35 minutes before the scheduled start of the game and has the responsibility of announcing the timing of the pre-game warm-up period. (6/92, 10/05)

h. Scouting

For in-season or post-season competition, no video, verbal, or written scouting report on any Conference team shall be communicated to non-Conference institutions, except as required by NCAA or Conference regulations. (10/08)

i. Tickets for Visiting Institution.

The host institution shall make its best effort to provide tickets behind the visiting team dugout to the visiting institution. The visiting institution shall notify the host institution by the preceding Wednesday of the number of tickets it requires for the games scheduled that week. (See also ER 1-7.) (6/03, 10/03)

j. Umpire Policies.

See AR 6 and AR 6-16.

k. Videotape Policies.

Institutions shall provide a centerfield camera location for both the home and visiting teams. The visiting team shall be allowed to have an equal number of videocameras recording the game as the home team, and shall have access to the same video locations. (10/01, 10/10)

3. Awards.

The Conference coaches shall select recipients for all softball awards. The timing of award selections shall be coordinated with NFCA awards timeline. A nomination form shall be issued by the Conference office to the head coaches in the first week of April. Each coach may nominate an unlimited number of his/her players for the all-Conference team, forwarding the nominations to the Conference office by the first Tuesday in May. Each head coach may also nominate one of his/her players for the Athlete of the Year award. When submitting nominations, the coaches shall rank all nominees, with one being the highest, two being the second highest, etc. The coaches shall also rank the Athlete of the Year and Newcomer of the Year nominations. Balloting conducted for individual awards shall use a weighted voting method. The coaches shall also vote for the Coach of the Year. Coaches shall not be allowed to vote for themselves or for their own players for any of the awards. Votes may be faxed or e-mailed to the Conference office by the established deadlines. (6/87, 6/89, 6/91, 6/92, 12/92, 12/93, 10/03, 6/11, 2/17)

a. All-Conference Team.

The all-Conference softball first team shall consist of 20 players and the second teams shall consist of 10 players, and the third team shall consist of 10 members. Each member of the first team shall be provided an award from the Conference. Each member of the second team shall receive a certificate from the Conference. (6/89, 6/92, 12/93, 2/99, 6/99, 10/03, 6/11, 8/16)

b. All-Defensive Team.

The all-Defensive Team shall be composed of nine players, selected by the coaches by the same process and on the same timeline as the other season-ending awards. Each member of the team shall receive a certificate from the Conference. (8/14)

c. All-Freshman Team.

The all-Freshman team shall consist of 14 players. Only true freshmen are eligible for selection to the team. Each member of the team shall receive a certificate from the Conference. (6/07)

d. Individual Awards.

Individual awards from the Conference shall be provided to the Coach of the Year, the Athlete of the Year, the Pitcher of the Year, the Freshman of the Year, the individual batting champion, and the best defensive player. (6/92, 12/93, 2/99, 10/02)

(1) Individual Batting Championship.

The individual with the highest batting average in all games shall be declared the batting champion. In order to qualify for the Conference batting championship, an individual must participate in 75 percent of her team's games and have a minimum of 2.5 plate appearances per game played by her team. If a tie exists between two or more individuals when their batting averages are rounded to thousandths, co-champions will be declared. (6/99, 10/10)

4. Meetings of Coaches.

There shall be an annual meeting of the softball coaches with the date and site to be established by the Conference office. The attendance of each head coach is mandatory. (6/90, 6/92)