Pitching Positions
Several questions and suggestions about the focus on pitching positions were received over the past few weeks. This feedback was reviewed by the Rules Committee at this week’s meeting. The following clarifications should assist the players, coaches, and umpires in playing by and administering the rule as it is written:

The emphasis on the pitcher’s initial position is important as more pitchers are taking positions that are difficult to determine if he was utilizing the windup or set, particularly with runners on base. Please review the wording that describes the “windup” in Rule 9-1-a and the “set” in Rule 9-1-b. The focus should be on the pitcher “declaring” or indicating which position he is using by his initial position on the pitcher’s plate. For the windup, “the pitcher shall stand with his chest and shoulders generally facing the batter.” For the set, “the pitcher stands with his chest generally facing the respective foul lines.”

One question asked has been how to determine if the chest and shoulders are “generally facing” the batter or the foul lines. In the NCAA baseball rules video, a “box” is drawn from points at the 45-foot marks of the foul lines back to the sides of the pitcher’s plate. There were questions about what determines if the pitcher’s initial position is within this box. For clarification determining the pitcher’s initial position, think about an arrow sticking straight out of the middle of the pitcher’s chest. If the pitcher is facing home plate directly, the arrow would be pointing straight to home plate or if the initial position is turned slightly toward the 1st or 3rd base lines and the arrow is pointing within the box, the pitcher is indicating a windup position by generally facing the batter with his chest and shoulders. If the pitcher’s initial position is toward the foul line and the arrow is outside the box, closer to 1st or 3rd base, the pitcher is indicating a set position. The rule does not address the direction that the feet should be pointing, but in a set position, the pivot foot is usually on or in front of and parallel to the rubber.

There have also been questions regarding the legality of the “gorilla” stance when taking a sign. There is a “Note” after Rule 9-1-b-1, the set position, that states “the pitcher may bend deeply at the waist and have his pitching arm hanging straight down in front of him.” When the pitcher is in this position, his shoulders are usually facing more toward the batter as he takes his sign. This is still legal, but the pitcher should briefly indicate the set position as he takes his initial position on the pitcher’s plate by positioning his pivot foot on or in front of and parallel to the rubber and his shoulders facing the foul line. He can then continue to bend at the waist to finish taking the sign and will be considered to be utilizing the set position.

Umpires are encouraged to assist the pitchers early in the season if they notice a pitcher violating the new rule during preseason workouts or during warmups prior to a game.
Updated Penalty for Rule 9-1-a and 9-1-b.
With the bases unoccupied, the umpire shall warn the pitcher and rule “no pitch” unless the batter reaches first base. Illegal pitch shall be called on subsequent offenses. Call a ball unless the batter reaches first base. With the bases occupied, a balk shall be called.

It is possible for each pitcher used during a game to receive a warning if this violation is called for the first time with no runners on base.

Video Instant Replay
Beginning with the 2017 season, the use of video instant replay is permitted by the NCAA playing rules. Institutions are permitted to utilize available technology to provide umpires additional information to assist with getting the call correct. Unless conference policy restricts the use of replay, any institution in any division is permitted to use video instant replay, provided the requirements of Appendix E, Section 2 are met.

Questions were ask regarding the review of specific elements of scoring plays at the plate and whether the umpires are to review only what the umpire crew is conferencing about or if they are to review all elements of the scoring play. To clarify letter f. “deciding scoring plays at home plate inclusive of collisions (illegal and/or malicious slides) or time plays,” the Baseball Rules Committee confirmed that the umpire will review the entire scoring play at home plate to make the correct call and not review only the element in question, such as an illegal slide or if the defensive player maintained possession of the ball to complete the out.

Barrel Compression Testing
Three conferences have instituted conference policies to utilize barrel compression testing for conference play. Information regarding this testing has been distributed with non-conference game contracts. The NCAA baseball playing rules do not require barrel testing. Rule 4.4.c requires that all head coaches, or their designee, confirm that his team’s playing equipment meets NCAA rules and regulations. Unless mutually agreed upon or agreed to by the game contract, non-conference opponents for schools of these conferences would not be required to submit to barrel compression testing.

Hopefully these clarifications will make the rules easier to understand and administer. Good luck as the season gets underway!

NCAA Baseball Rules Committee
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