

New Rules Of Pitching

2020 may be the year of the Pitcher! There are some exciting changes to the rules that took place this year across the various governing bodies. Before we get into what they are you should know there isn't a single governing rules body for Softball. In fact, there are quite a few. Too many if you ask me! For our league, we are governed by USA Softball. College softball of course is governed by NCAA. High School has its own CIF rules body and there are other organizations such as PGF, USSSA, NSA to name a few. Describing each governing body would take up its own Coaches Corner! The key point is that there are two different pitching rule changes and each governing body adopted one or the other.

Lets start with what the rule was BEFORE this year. As you can see on the picture on the right both feet had to start with contact on the pitching plate and stay within the 24" length of the plate.




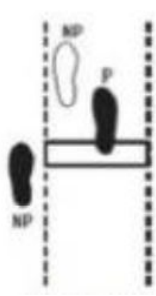
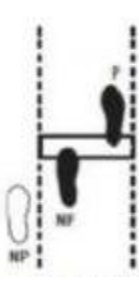

USA Softball rule changes affecting pitching: STEP BACK RULE.

(Also adopted by High Schools, USSSA)

The main change to the rules are to Rule 6A, Section 1C and Rule 6A, Section 1E. Here is the exact text as published by USA Softball:

- **Rule 6A, Section 1C:** *Both feet must be on the ground within the 24-inch length of the pitcher's plate. The shoulders shall be in line with first and third bases. The pitcher shall take a position with their pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate and their non-pivot foot in contact with or behind the pitcher's plate.*
 - **Comment:** *Allows female pitchers to start with one or two feet on the pitcher's plate. This aligns the male and female pitching rule as it relates to foot placement.*
- **Rule 6A, Section 1E:** *The pitcher shall bring their hands together for not less than one second and not more than 10 seconds before releasing the ball. A backward step may be taken before, simultaneous with or after the hands are brought together. The pivot foot must remain in contact with the pitcher's plate at all times prior to the forward step.*
 - **Comment:** *Allows female pitchers to take a backward step from the pitcher's plate, before, during or after the hands are brought together. This aligns the male and female pitching rule as it relates to stepping back from the pitcher's plate.*

What these two rule changes are being commonly referred to are the "step back" rule. **As of 1/1/2020 the pitcher can now have her NP (Non Pivot foot aka left foot for right handed pitchers) start on or behind the pitching plate AND can then take a step back.** Here are some pictures showing what is now legal and what is still illegal:

			
<p>Now Legal NP foot on or behind plate</p>	<p>Still Illegal Foot starting outside 24" plate</p>	<p>Illegal NP Step back outside 24" plate</p>	<p>Still Illegal Foot starting outside 24" plate</p>

NCAA Softball rule changes affecting pitching: **START BACK RULE**

(Also adopted by PGF)

The main rule changes affecting pitching are 10.1.1, 10.2.1, and 10.2.2.

10.2.2 deals with taking signs and will not be covered here. 10.1.1 and 10.2.1 cover the "start back" changes. Here is the NCAA Text:

- *10.1.1 – The pitcher is considered to be in the pitching position when she has her hands apart, her pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate, both feet on the ground within the 24-inch length of the pitcher's plate, the hips in line with first and third bases, she steps forward, puts both feet on the pitcher's plate, and the catcher is in position to receive the pitch.*
- *10.2.1.1 – ~~Both feet must be on the ground in contact with the pitcher's plate. Any part of each foot in contact with the ground or pitcher's plate must be completely within the 24-inch length of the pitcher's plate. The stride foot may be on or behind the pitcher's plate as far back as desired. Once the pitcher initially sets the toe of her stride foot, she may not step back any farther to increase the distance behind the pitcher's plate.~~*
 - ***Rationale:** To allow the pitcher to begin with her stride (non-pivot) foot behind the pitcher's plate as far back as desired. It is very difficult for an umpire to see if a pitcher's stride foot is actually in contact with the pitcher's plate, and there is no advantage to establishing the stride foot behind the pitcher's plate as long as the pitcher is not allowed to step farther back during the start of the pitch. This change will provide pitchers with greater balance and take into account their variances in sizes and strengths without creating any type of unfair advantage*

What these two rule changes are being commonly referred to are the "start back" rule. **As of 1/1/2020 the pitcher can now have her NP start on or behind the pitching plate but can NOT step further back during the start of the pitch.**

What does this mean for our pitchers in SVGS:

SVGS is governed by USA Softball rules. We will allow the “step back” rule. The NCAA Rule is included here so coaches have context and better their understanding of the changes. Please note that the “start back” rule is fully legal under the “step back rule” and that your pitcher does not have to start back or step back. They can continue to pitch as they do now. They now have the option to continue as they have or change to a start back, or a step back.

Here is a link to Amanda Scarborough website with a video she made explaining some of the differences with her own comments and recommendations. Im sure there are other resources online if you need further clarification

<https://amanda-scarborough.com/2020-new-softball-pitching-rule-changes/>

Other 2020 USA Softball Rule Changes:

There are a few more rules which impacts Junior Olympic Fast Pitch but are much more straightforward. The first deals with bats/balls/hemets and certification marks. Of interest is shinny blinding helmets arent allowed anymore. Its listed here for your reference:

- Rule 3, Section 1A [1]: *The official bat must bear either the ASA 2000, ASA 2004, ASA 2013 or the new approved USA Softball Certification Marks.*
 - Comment: *Adds two additional USA Softball Certification Marks to the list of Certification Marks allowed on approved bats.*
- Rule 3, Section 3A: *The official softball must bear either the ASA Certification Marks, or the new USA Softball Certification Marks allowed on approved softballs.*
 - Comment: *Adds USA Softball Certification Marks to the list of approved Certification Marks allowed on softballs.*
- Rule 3, Section 5E: *Helmets shall have a non-glare (not mirror-like) surface.*
 - Comment: *Specifies that helmets cannot have a surface that has a mirror-like finish.*

The second set of rules are tied to the pitching changes and change the penalty for an illegal pitch and illegal bats. **The main takeaway from these changes is that runners on base will NO LONGER be awarded advancement to next base on an illegal pitch. The batter will receive a ball without any baserunners advancing.**

- Rule 6A, Section 11B&C, Rule 7, Section 5D: *(Junior Olympic Fast Pitch Only)*
- *Eliminates the penalty of advancing a runner one base without liability to be put out from the effect of committing an illegal pitch.*
 - Comment: *In Junior Olympic Fast Pitch ONLY, when an illegal pitch is declared, the penalty is only a ball on the batter. We no longer advance runners in Junior Olympic Fast Pitch as part of the penalty.*
- Rule 7, Section 6C: Add Effect: 5. *All other runners return to the base occupied at the time of the pitch.*
 - Comment: *Aligns the penalty for Altered and Non-Approved bats with the penalty for an Illegal bat. Better defines where runners who are not out should be placed.*