

MEMO

DATE: March 4, 2003
TO: Conference Softball Coordinators
FROM: Jeff Hansen, National Coordinator
RE: Information Update

Greetings! The National Umpire Improvement Program, in an attempt to keep you informed of newsworthy items, invites you to read the following newsletter and take action where necessary with the umpires on your roster. As a recipient of this newsletter, you are free to distribute this information in any manner you see fit.

Strike Zone- Despite the best intentions of the national umpire staff to address the issue of a more standardized strike zone around the country, it appears that our efforts have contributed to some confusion and disagreement where efforts exist to reconcile the differences between the pictured zone on page 138 of the rules book and the written word. As many of you know, in clinics and on the NCAA Softball video, we have urged umpires to bring the ball 'up' at both the bottom and top of the zone. (For the record, bringing the ball up remains a concern in some areas of the country.) We chose to use the picture in the book to help illustrate what we felt was the preferred zone for Division I softball. As discussion of the zone has continued to evolve early in the season, it has become apparent to the staff that the picture in the book creates a 'no win' situation for players and coaches to understand and umpires to enforce because of the conflict with the written description in the book. **To be certain that the game of softball maintain its integrity through enforcement of the rules, we urge all who hold a place of leadership with umpires to encourage use of the written rule (instead of the picture) for the remainder of the season.** The Rules Committee will be offering an opportunity for discussion about change in the zone in their annual rules survey later this spring. If change is desired, the process must begin in this manner. Thanks for your assistance with this issue and I apologize for any problems we may have unintentionally created.

Regional Clinics- We are pleased to announce that three sites have been secured for the first-ever NCAA sponsored umpire clinics to be held prior to the 2004 softball season. You will receive an information packet later this spring detailing the program for the one-day clinics and information about rooms and registration. The dates and sites of the meetings, which will rotate locations each year, are as follows: December 13, 2003 at the Los Angeles Airport Marriott; January 10, 2004 at the Atlanta Airport Renaissance Hotel; and January 17, 2004 at the Chicago O'Hare Marriott. Conferences with large numbers of umpires who live near these locations are urged to consider holding your administrative meetings in conjunction with the regional meetings.

Banned Bats- We remind you to have your umpires follow the procedures outlined on the chart on page 224 of the rules book for all incidents involving banned bats. To date, very few incidents have been reported. In an effort to provide clarification as it relates to the **Worth** company, the manufacturer has asked us to pass along the following information about the **Worth** model 3DXFP. The 3DXFP is the only bat model they make for fast pitch softball and it is legal. Some confusion exists because they market five models (some for baseball and one for slow pitch) under the 3DX product line. The fast pitch bat is identifiable with the model number (3DXFP) listed under the **Worth** logo on one side of the bat in small letters, and the words "Fast Pitch" in red letters above the 3DX logo on the other side of the bat. We hope this information will help educate your umpires to make informed decisions as they relate to legal bats.

Please feel free to contact your regional coordinator or me if you need further information about any of these topics. Have a great season!