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The following is the result of the Eastern Illinois University protest of their three games against University of Illinois on October 11 and 12, 2014.

Games protested by EIU for Uniform Violation in all three games and Umpire Decision in Violation of NCSA Rules in Game 1.

**Requested Action** - Forfeit games.

**Protest:**

EIU is protesting their three games against University of Illinois on October 11 and 12, 2014, requesting forfeit victories because Illinois was in violation of following NCSA rules:

8.00.00 (Uniforms) 8.01.0 Players Uniform 8.01.1 The NCSA will adhere to NCAA requirements regarding player's uniforms excluding the following exceptions.

8.01.1.1 It is **NOT** required that each team have **TWO** sets of uniform jerseys of contrasting colors.

8.02.0 It is the responsibility of the visiting team to wear a contrasting uniform color to the jersey worn by the home team **ONLY** if a contrasting uniform color is available.

In regards to the uniform protest of all three games, EIU Club Softball President, Charity Huwe, stated "ALL OF THE U OF I GIRLS STILL DID NOT HAVE THE SAME UNIFORMS AND SO THEREFORE THEY HAD TO SHARE. THIS MADE THEM NOT PUT NUMBERS FOR THEIR SUBS ON THE LINE-UP CARD. AS A RESULT SOME GIRLS WOULD HAVE HAD TO SHARE THE SAME NUMBER. SOME GIRLS WORE BELTS AND SOME GIRLS DID NOT." Game 1 Only – "SOME GIRLS WERE WEARING T-SHIRTS (ONE GRAY AND ONE WHITE) INSTEAD OF UNIFORM TOPS."

EIU is also protesting an umpire decision in Game 1 against University of Illinois on October 11, 2014, requesting forfeit victories because Illinois was in violation of following NCSA rules:

NCAA Div. 1 Rules – 5.6 Lineup Card – Notes: 1. *Players not listed on the official lineup card are not eligible to play.* 8.3.4 Illegal Player(s). (See also Appendix B.) 8.3.4.1.3 A player who is not listed on the lineup card.

In regards to the Game 1 protest of the umpire decision in violation of NCSA rules, EIU Club Softball President, Charity Huwe, stated "THE LINE-UP FOR U OF I ONLY HAD 13 GIRLS LISTED ON IT. THERE WERE REALLY 14 GIRLS IN THE DUGOUT. THE 14<sup>TH</sup> GIRL (#25) CAME INTO THE GAME IN THE 5<sup>TH</sup> INNING TO PITCH AND SHE WAS NOT ON THE ORIGINAL ROSTER/LINE-UP THAT WAS HANDED TO THE COACHES AND UMPIRES AT THE BEGINNING OF THE GAME. IT WAS BROUGHT TO THE UMPIRES ATTENTION IN THE 5<sup>TH</sup> INNING, WHEN SHE CAME IN TO PLAY, THAT THIS WAS NOT ALLOWED BECAUSE SHE WASN'T ON THE LINE-UP AT THE START OF THE GAME. HE SAID THAT AS LONG AS THE GIRL WAS ON THE "OFFICIAL ROSTER" ONLINE THEN THEY DID NOT HAVE TO BE ON THE LINE-UP CARD AT THE BEGINNING OF THE GAME. ONE OF OUR COACHES LOOKED UP THE LINE-UP RULE ON THE 2014-2015 NCAA RULEBOOK AND SHOWED THE HOME UMPIRE THAT IT SAID, " PLAYERS NOT LISTED ON THE OFFICIAL LINE-UP CARD ARE NOT ELLIGIBLE TO PLAY " (SECTION 5.6 LINE-UP CARD) AND HE SAID THAT IT WAS UP TO HIS DISCRESSION ON WHAT COULD BE PROTESTED. OUR TEAM EVEN SHOWED HIM RULE 17.01.0 IN THE NCSA RULES BUT HE DISREGARDED IT."

## Defense:

In regards to the uniform protest of all three games, Illinois Club Softball President, Julie Sweeney, stated “At the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> game Charity and her corresponding coach said that they were going to be playing the 1<sup>st</sup> game in protest because our uniforms were not matching because our substitutes were wearing tshirts (under their jackets so this was not visible during game play). At the time of her protest 8/9 of our desired players to play had uniforms and numbers. EIU was very adamant about not playing with jackets on and uniforms must be visible so for the 9<sup>th</sup> player to start the game we had her take another legitimate uniform from one of our girls on the substitutions roster. This was recommended by the umpires. So, at the start of game 1, when the 1<sup>st</sup> pitch was thrown, 9 out of our 9 active players on the field were wearing orange socks, blue pants, and a white U of Illinois uniform with a unique number on the back. Throughout the game, no numbers were shared among players (ie- Julie Sweeney remained number 14 throughout the entire duration of game 1, Morgan Manka remained 23 throughout the entire duration of game 1, etc) and no girl who played in the game was without a matching uniform. As I’m sure the umpires present will also state, in every game, our active players had a number and our uniforms were all matching. The only substitution made in game 1 was number #25 for #8, and #25 as well had her own unique number and jersey. No jersey was taken off and shared throughout the duration of game 1. I have the same response for game 2 regarding the uniforms as I had for game 1. At the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> game Charity and her corresponding coach said that they were going to be playing the 2<sup>nd</sup> game in protest because our uniforms were not matching because our substitutes were wearing tshirts (under their jackets so this was not visible during game play). At the time of her protest 9/9 of our desired players to play had uniforms and numbers. So, at the start of game 2, when the 1<sup>st</sup> pitch was thrown, 9 out of our 9 active players on the field were wearing orange socks, blue pants, and a white U of Illinois uniform with a unique number on the back. Throughout the game, no numbers were shared among players (ie- Julie Sweeney remained number 14 throughout the entire duration of game 2, Morgan Manka remained 23 throughout the entire duration of game 2, etc) and no girl who played in the game was without a matching uniform. As I’m sure the umpires present will also state, in every game, our active players had a number and our uniforms were all matching. There were no substitutions made in game 2 by the University of Illinois, therefore no jersey was taken off and shared throughout the duration of game 2. I again have the same response for game 3 regarding the uniforms as I had for games 1 and 2. At the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> game Charity and her corresponding coach said that they were going to be playing the 3<sup>rd</sup> game in protest because our uniforms were not matching because our substitutes were wearing tshirts (under their jackets so this was not visible during game play). At the time of her protest 9/9 of our desired players to play had uniforms and numbers. So, at the start of game 3, when the 1<sup>st</sup> pitch was thrown, 9 out of our 9 active players on the field were wearing orange socks, blue pants, and a white U of Illinois uniform with a unique number on the back. Throughout the game, no numbers were shared among players (ie- Julie Sweeney remained number 14 throughout the entire duration of game 2, Morgan Manka remained 23 throughout the entire duration of game 2, etc) and no girl who played in the game was without a matching uniform. As I’m sure the umpires present will also state, in every game, our active players had a number and our uniforms were all matching. The only substitution made in game 3 was #13 entering in for #25 in the top of the 4<sup>th</sup> inning and #13 as well had her own unique number and jersey. No jersey was taken off and shared throughout the duration of game 3.”

In regards to the Game 1 protest of the umpire decision in violation of NCSA rules Illinois Club Softball President, Julie Sweeney, stated “At the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> inning of game 1 vs. EIU, we made a substitution #25 entering for #8. I recognized before the inning started that #25 Marissa Lombardo was previously left off the lineup card. I immediately approached the home plate umpire, Jeff, and explained to him the situation. He clarified that because I recognized this error before play, she was now declared officially in the game. I then confronted the EIU coach, and informed her, to which she added Marissa onto the lineup card through both teams. Marissa was recognized as entering into the game. I further then told our field umpire Helen the situation. This all happened before any play in the 5<sup>th</sup> inning. It was in the midst of the 1<sup>st</sup> batter in the 5<sup>th</sup> inning that Charity chose to protest this as well. Again, this protest was never recorded or recognized officially by the home team book keeper or the umpire. Marissa Lombardo has been on our official UIUC and NCSA roster since September 18, 2014. If we were informed by the umpires that this substitution would have been illegal and affected our standings we obviously would not have pursued. However, both umpires informed us that it is allowed and that we should continue with no consequences.”

### **Investigation:**

In regards to the uniform protest of all three games – Illinois may have originally been in violation of the NCSA uniform rules, but as stated in the rules they were given the opportunity to correct the violation and adhere properly to the rules.

NCAA Uniforms 3.10 EFFECT-(3.10.1-3.10.9) The umpire shall issue a warning to any player not complying with the uniform rule. Any player not correcting the uniform violation shall be ejected.

In regards to belts – NCAA 3.10 – Uniform accessories are optional parts of the uniform and may be of mixed styles.

It is evident from their defense statement that Illinois did make the proper corrections by having all nine of their starters and any entered-substitutes wear unique numbers and substitutes were never entered into the game with the same number as a player who previously played in the game. Furthermore, the EIU protest report stated that these were off-field protests, which are incorrect due to NCSA rule 17.02.1 – “On Field Protests consists of protests regarding Uniform Violations, Equipment Violations, Umpire decisions believed to be in violation of NCSA rules, Umpire qualifications, and In-Game Known Roster Violations.”

In regards to the Game 1 protest of the umpire decision in violation of NCSA rules – The player in question, #25 Marissa Lombardo, was not listed on the lineup card at the beginning of the game. This has been confirmed by all parties, EIU, Illinois and the home plate umpire. When entering her into the game, this was in violation of NCSA rules:

NCAA Div. 1 Rules – 5.6 Lineup Card – Notes: 1. *Players not listed on the official lineup card are not eligible to play.* 8.3.4 Illegal Player(s). (See also Appendix B.) 8.3.4.1.3 A player who is not listed on the lineup card. Appendix B – Improper Player Chart – In all instances the illegal player should have been ejected from the game.

After being presented with these specific rules the umpire decided to allow the player to enter the game.

**Ruling:**

For the uniform protest of all three games - **Protest Denied** – While the protest was denoted as an off-field protest, this is an in-game protest situation. Furthermore, whether or not the formal protest was made at the beginning of the games, Illinois did comply with NCSA rules by changing into matching uniforms as stated in their defense argument. The correct rules were followed in this situation as the offending team was given the opportunity to correct the uniform violation and did so to the best of their ability. As described in their defense, Illinois did not play any players with the same numbers, therefore there was no in-game uniform violation.

For the Game 1 protest of the umpire decision in violation of NCSA rules - **Protest Granted Replay of Game from Point of Protest** – After hearing from all sides there is ambiguity in the steps taken to officially protest this situation in Game 1 of the series. Due to umpire inconsistencies and credibility issues regarding the use of NCSA rules, we must go straight to the facts that are present in all sides of the argument. The Illinois player, #25 Marissa Lombardo, is indeed an eligible player on the official Illinois NCSA roster. This issue is that she was not listed on the lineup card presented at the beginning of Game 1 and is therefore an “Illegal Player” for this game as per NCAA rules listed in the investigation. The umpires’ decision was indeed in violation of NCSA rules and therefore must be rectified by the NCSA protest rule and replayed from the point of protest. No forfeit win will be awarded, but the protest is considered valid, the decision will be corrected, and the game will be replayed from the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> inning where the incorrect decision was made. The same lineup card shall be used when the game is resumed, a pregame meeting shall be held to verify accuracy (such as changed jersey numbers), and substitutions may be legally placed into the lineups at this time. Any players not listed on the original lineup card will still be ineligible to enter the game, including the player deemed illegal for this game, #25 Marissa Lombardo.

**Savannah Ahrens**  
**NCSA VP of Operations**