



Baseball Bulletin 2024-4

Date: April 26, 2024

From: Frank Grubb, Director of Officiating Development

Topics

- Register now for the Pre-Tournament 3 and 4 umpire clinic is scheduled for May 18, 2024 from 9-3 at Grove City High School, Grove City, OH 43123. [Register here!](#) The clinic is free and we will focus on mechanics we want used during the postseason tournament. Registration will close on May 12th. Wear your base-uniform for the clinic.
 - Time 9-3:00 PM
 - 9:00 – 9:30 am – registration (Grove City High School Cafeteria)
 - 9:30-10:30 am – 3 umpire mechanics presentation
 - 10:30-11:30 am – 4 umpire mechanics presentation
 - 11:30-12:15 – break for lunch (Pizza)
 - 12:15-2:45ish – On field mechanics situations (Baseball Field)
 - 2:45-3:00 – Wrap up
- **Charged conferences:** Please review rule 3-4 on Charged Conferences. We must know what constitutes a conference and when a conference ends. Also, we must record conferences as they happen. It's also a good practice to communicate with the coach when a conference occurs and how many available conferences they have left. For offensive conferences, remember they get one per inning. For defensive conferences, the team gets 3 free conferences per 7-inning game (extra innings, 1 per inning). These conferences have no restrictions regarding when they can be taken. A team can take all three defensive conferences in the same inning or during the same at-bat without having to replace the pitcher.
- **Plays at the plate on passed balls/wild pitches:** Mechanically, we encourage umpires to take plays at the plate from the third-base line extended. The exception to this is when a throw is coming from the backstop area behind you as the plate umpire. We need to be aware of where the throw is coming from and adjusting our position so we are not in or near the path of the throw to the plate. I've heard from one observer (who observes many lower level games for advancement purposes) that he has witnessed multiple umpires get hit or nearly get hit on throws coming from behind the umpire. Stay safe and get out of the way!
- **3rd to 1st pickoffs** – The feint to 3rd on a pickoff attempt is legal in high school baseball assuming there is a runner on third or it is an attempt to make a play on a runner attempting to advance to third. Once the pitcher feints to third and disengages the pitcher's plate, he can then feint to

first during the same play. The only base the pitcher cannot feint a throw from the pitcher's plate is 1st base. This rule is different than they NCAA and MLB rules. We've had multiple reports from multiple districts that the feint to 3rd base is being ruled a balk! Know the NFHS rule and review rules 6-2-4 and casebook play 6.2.4 Situation C (please read this case play fully and carefully to understand it completely!)

- **3 ball & 2 strike games** – OHIO does not play 3 ball & 2 strike games at any level! If an out of state school is playing a game in Ohio they must play by NFHS and Ohio rules. For balls/strikes in Ohio we play 4 balls or 3 strikes only.
- **Hidden ball trick-** The hidden ball trick play is legal but certain criteria must be followed for it to occur and be successful and not a balk. First, the ball must remain live. If the ball is declared dead while in possession of anyone other than the pitcher, the ball must be returned to the pitcher prior to the ball being put in play. We can't put the ball in play without the pitcher being on the pitcher's plate, with the ball, and all other fielders in legal position. If the ball is put in play and it is later determined that these requirements are not met, we reset, without penalty to either team. As umpires, we must know where the ball is at all times. If time is called and the ball is not returned to the pitcher in what appears to be a hidden ball trick play, we can call attention to this to prevent further confusion. If no time is called, and the ball is in possession of someone other than the pitcher, we must be aware of who has the ball while also paying attention to the pitchers' actions and not "tipping off" the offensive team. The pitcher can not be within 5 feet of the pitcher's plate without having the ball while this play attempt is happening, otherwise, he would be guilty of a balk (6.2.5).

As we approach the end of the season, let's keep in mind that many of the student-athletes we officiate will be approaching the last time they ever put on a uniform, swing at a pitch, and field a ball in a competitive game. Often during this time, players and coaches are feeling the pressure to finish the season positively and continue playing in the post-season. As umpires, we need to remain professional and calm while others' emotions are heightened. We need to continue to work hard and give the student-athletes 100% of our abilities every night. In addition, I find engaged listening to be a skill that often diffuses situations when we listen to a complaint fully and then giving a rebuttal in a calm and explanatory nature. Interrupting a coach while he is talking is frustrating and usually worsens the engagement. Likewise, when we are speaking, it is ok to remind the coach to let you explain what you have without interruption. We must use the tools we have when coaches and players are out of line, and we should use the escalation process available to us as appropriate. Verbal warning, written warning (restriction), ejection. Obviously, there are times when situations immediately rise the ejection level, but those should be the exception and not the norm.

Additionally, thank you all for continue to submit your sportsmanship reports for both positive and ejectionable situations. Please be as detailed as possible when submitting these reports with the situation, actual language that was used, and warnings that were issued. Please stick to the facts of the situation without giving opinionated statements. Also, it's a good idea to proof-read your statements before submitting them.

Good Luck the rest of the season!