



Baseball Bulletin 2024-1

January 22, 2024

From: Frank Grubb, Director of Officiating Development

- **Introduction** – I'm excited to take over the role of the Director of Officiating Development. I look forward to meeting as many of you as I can through the upcoming State Rules Interpreters meetings as well as through the baseball regular and tournament seasons. The previous two DODs have set baseball umpiring up for a path of continued success and I only hope to continue down that path. A big thank you and congratulations to Dan McGinnis who held this position since 2015. I couldn't ask for a better mentor along with his predecessor, Kyle McNeely.

As for baseball umpiring expectations for 2024, expectations will remain the same. Blue book mechanics are required. Mentoring of fellow umpires is a must especially those that are newer. Knowledge of the rule and casebook is essential to our success. As you have questions regarding rules and mechanics, please reach out to your local association mechanics and rules interpreters. They are your local experts and can more than likely get back to you quicker than I. If they have questions, they should reach out to me directly.

- **State Rules Interpretation meetings** – As usual, there will be a state rules interpretation meeting available on-line beginning in February (date tbd). If you prefer to attend an in-person state rules interpretation meeting, the schedule is as follows:
 - January 30 – East Muskingum Middle School, New Concord, OH
 - January 31 – Upper Arlington High School, Upper Arlington, OH
 - February 6 – Lakota West High School, West Chester, OH
 - February 8 – Garfield Heights High School, Cleveland, OH
 - February 13 – Jackson High School, Jackson, OH
 - February 15 – Donnell Middle School, Findlay, OH
 - February 20 – Upper Valley Career Center, Piqua, OH
 - February 22 – Stark County Education Service Center, Canton, OH

All meetings will begin at 6:00 PM in combination with Softball. At 6:00 pm the softball SRI meeting and the baseball local meeting will begin in separate rooms. Following these meetings, the Baseball SRI and softball local meetings will occur. By attending, you will be able to get credit for two meetings maximum (2 SRI meetings baseball and softball, 2 local meetings baseball and softball, or 1 state SRI and 1 local of the same sport)

- **Local on-line meetings** – We will once again publish two local on-line meetings during the spring. The dates are to be determined.
- **Clinics** – We have organized three clinics this year. The theme for this year’s clinics is “Back to Basics.” I want the focus of this year’s clinics to be on our fundamental mechanics. We have so many newer umpires since the pandemic that haven’t been exposed to the same level of mechanics training as some of our veteran umpires. We are going to focus on the new through 5th year umpire although all are welcome. The cost for attendance is \$35, which covers lunch, facility rentals and other clinic expenses. We are attempting to keep the cost down as low as possible. I highly encourage any newer umpire or any veteran umpire who would like to brush up on mechanics to attend.

To register for the clinics, please use the links below and submit payment per the instructions on the registration form:

- **Saturday, February 17, 2024, 9:00-2:00** – Franklin Heights High School, 1001 Demorest Road, Columbus, OH 43204 [Register here](#)
 - **Saturday, February 24, 2024, 9:00-2:00** – Rossford High School, 28720 Lime City Rd, Perrysburg, OH 43551 [Register here](#)
 - **Sunday, March 3, 2024, 9:00-1:00pm** – Norton High School, 1 Panther Way, Norton, OH 44203 [Register here](#)
- **Fitness and pre-season readiness** – I want to encourage all of you to start getting your body ready for the season. Every year we hear about umpires getting injuries that might have been prevented with a little preseason conditioning and stretching. If you’ve been sedentary during these winter months, it’s time to get out and start moving. It doesn’t take much, a 20-minute walk to start with or some body weight squats and pushups. Personally, I enjoy getting out during these cold months and getting a good sweat going! You’ll find me around the trails of my hometown, Grove City, running my normal 3, 4, or 5 mile loops a few times a week when I’m not inside on the bike trainer or at the pool swimming.
 - **Recruiting** – In recent years our total number of umpires has declined each year. Our best recruiters are those who are current umpires. I encourage each of you to talk about the benefits of umpiring with your friends, neighbors, or whomever you think may enjoy it. It’s never been easier to get licensed. A prospect just needs to go to officials.myohsaa.org, create an account and register for a course. More information can be found on the ohsaa.org website.
 - **Cold weather cap** – Along with Jerry Fick, Softball DOD, we have approved the use of an OHSAA logo “beanie” style cap for optional use in cold weather situations. The cap must adhere to other uniform requirements in being navy blue with the OHSAA officiating logo included on the cap. It can be worn by either the base umpire or the plate umpire or both in lieu of the standard billed cap with OHSAA logo. This cap should only be used in cold weather situations.



- **Uniform for baseball** – The uniform requirements for baseball remain unchanged, however, I’ve received a few emails regarding the language in the blue book. It states, “All umpires on a crew for any regular or postseason games are to be dressed alike.” I will be looking to update this language for future years. It is permissible for the plate umpire to wear a different top than the base umpire(s). For instance, the base umpire may want to wear a jacket, but the plate umpire wants to wear a shirt (long or short sleeved). As it has been in the past, this is allowable. If there are more than one base umpire, they should be dressed alike. Also, please, no long-sleeved exposed undershirts underneath a short-sleeved umpire shirt.
- **Video** – I am always on the lookout for usable video of high school baseball. If you have video that may be of interest for training purposes (mechanics, difficult plays, etc), please send me those clips or links to those clips to fgrubb@ohsaa.org.
- **Changes to mechanics** – I will be reviewing the blue book for updates throughout 2024 in preparation for any needed updates for the 2025 version. Our mechanics will continue to be what is best for high school baseball in Ohio, regardless of what the NCAA or MLB does. However, I am open to suggestions that make sense for Ohio umpires. If you have suggestions, please work through your local mechanics interpreter to send me suggestions.
- **Social Media** – There is a phrase that I try to live by that resonates with me as I manage a team in my regular job and parent my two daughters. “Beware the Shadow you cast.” The perception that people have of us are formed by our actions. This applies to how we handle ourselves at the schools we serve both on and off the field, at our jobs, with our families, and how we interact on social media. Having been involved with official leadership at the local level for many years, I’ve been involved with more than one conversation with fellow officials about their online presence and how they represent themselves when it comes to officiating. Please be cognizant when you post on social media, everyone is watching, even when you think it’s private. Sometimes it’s best to keep comments to yourself instead of fishing for likes. As it has been said before, we have a freedom of speech, but it is not always without consequences. The official OHSAA social media policy for officials can be found on page 27 of the Officials Handbook.

Have a great season! Work hard and good luck!