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Baseball Bulletin 2025-1

January 22, 2025

From: Frank Grubb, Director of Officiating Development

* **Introduction** – As I write this there is still snow on the ground outside my window. The good news is, it will melt and somewhat warmer weather will be here soon! I’m greatly looking forward to kicking things off with our state rules interpretation meetings and the local clinics being held around the state! It’s an exciting time to meet new people as well as reconnecting with old friends! I highly recommend attending an in-person state meeting. It’s an opportunity to get both your state and a local meeting credit or if you also do softball, to get both state meeting credits as well as ask questions regarding the information being presented.
* **State Rules Interpretation meetings** – As usual, there will be a state rules interpretation meeting available on-line beginning in February. If you prefer to attend an in-person state rules interpretation meeting, the schedule is as follows:
  + **Monday, January 27 - Columbus** – Frankin Heights HS – 1001 Demorest Rd, Columbus
  + **Wednesday, January 29 – New Concord** – John Glenn High School – 13120 John Glenn School Rd, New Concord
  + **Thursday, February 6 – Cleveland** – Berea-Midpark High School, 165 E. Bagley Rd, Berea (Enter at side gym doors in back of school off of Eastland Road)
  + **Wednesday, February 12** – West Chester – Lakota West High School, 8940 Union Centre Blvd, West Chester (Cafeteria - Enter through cafeteria doors east end of building – Door #24)
  + **Thursday, February 13 – Findlay** – Donnell Middle School – 301 Baldwin Ave., Findlay
  + **Tuesday, February 18 – Piqua** – Upper Valley Career Center – 8811 Career Dr., Piqua
  + **Thursday, February 20 –Canton** – Stark County Educational Service Center, 6057 Strip Ave NW, Canton

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, but will more than likely be late March and Mid April.
* **Clinics** – We have organized two clinics this year. This year we will again focus on the newer umpire, however, I encourage all umpires to attend to brush up on mechanics and rules.

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

* **Saturday, February 15, 2025, 11:30 – 3:30** – Cleveland – St. Ignatius High School, 1911 West 30th Street, Cleveland [Register here](https://forms.gle/iYtcQgSrYEhS4G7s6)
* **Saturday, March 8, 9:00-1:00 –** Rossford High School, 28720 Lime City Rd, Perrysburg, OH 43551 [Register here](https://forms.gle/SERiKHVpq2W45o7D6)

The cost of each clinic will be $35 payable to the local organization organizing the clinic. This will cover the costs of running the clinic. This is an excellent opportunity to get evaluated and receive instruction from some of the best umpires in the state! Multiple umpires received regional assignments for the first time last year in part because of their clinic participation and the evaluations we received.

* **Local Association membership and meetings – JOIN A LOCAL ASSOCIATION!!! –** I’ve received several questions over the past year and my previous years as a secretary/treasurer of my local association. Membership and participation in your local associations is imperative to your success as an umpire as well as the success of our collective efforts around the state. Your local associations are there to assist you with connecting you to assignors, answering questions related to rules and mechanics, conducting local clinics and training opportunities, and providing you with educational meetings to fulfill your required local meeting credits. Umpires often ask me and other leaders around the state, “how do I advance and get varsity games or tournament games?” I always ask the individual, “How involved are you in your local association?” I find a lot of these people asking the how are the same people that sit in the back of the meeting playing on their phone or having other conversations. Be a member, be involved, network with the leadership of the organization and you’ll be amazed at the success you may find.

If you are unable to find a local association, please contact your district administrator which can be found at https://www.ohsaa.org/Officiating/localassociations

* **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 in Dragonfly and register for a course. It has never been easier to get started! More information can be found on the ohsaa.org website.
* **Cold weather cap** – As a reminder, we have approved the use of an OHSAA logo “beanie” style cap for optional use in cold weather situations for baseball and softball. 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. You can purchase one of these at Flemings Ref and Sport and Purchase Officials Supply.

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* **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 –** There are no mechanics changes for 2025. I’ve updated the introduction section of the Blue Book but outside of that, it remains relatively unchanged with the exception of a few editorial adjustments.
* **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 of 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.
* This year, OHSAA has expanded the divisions in baseball, going from 4 divisions to 7. This will obviously change how the State and Regional tournaments are assigned and conducted. The state tournament will be held June 13-15th in the Akron/Canton area. Four divisions will play on Friday at Canal Park in Akron, Thurmon Munson and Kent State in Canton. Those four division finals will be played on Saturday at Canal Park. The remaining three divisions will play their semifinals on Saturday at the other two sites with their finals concluding the State tournament on Sunday at Canal Park.

Regional Tournaments will be held June 3-5 (yes, Tuesday through Thursday), with some locations playing Tuesday/Wednesday games and other sites playing Wednesday/Thursday games. It’s my understanding this is due to the lateness of this year’s tournament and many regional sites have long standing contracts with summer travel tournaments.