



Ohio High School Athletic Association

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Softball Bulletin

Director of Officials Development – Softball

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**THIS ISSUE OF THE SOFTBALL BULLETIN OPENS WITH SOME REMINDERS AND COMMENTS ON RULES QUESTIONS THEN CONTINUES WITH SOME INFORMATION ON OBSTUCTION.**

- **REMINDER - Our Pre-Tournament Clinic will be held this Sunday, May 15 at Waggoner Rd. Junior High School, 360 South Waggoner Rd. in Reynoldsburg. Registration will begin at noon and the clinic will start at 1230 PM and conclude around 4PM. All OHSAA umpires are welcome. In addition to other information we will highlight the three umpire system used in our Regional and District games. This is one of our best attended events each year and I'm looking forward to seeing our umpires turn out for a fun day.**
- Leaping – We have had some reports that there is some confusion concerning what the pitcher may do under NFHS rules. There is no change to this rule for 2022. Under Rule 6-1-2c the pivot foot may remain in contact with or push off and drag away from the pitching plate. The pivot foot must remain within the 24 inches of the pitching plate and in contact with the ground. If a hole has been created in front of the plate the pivot foot may lose contact with the ground but not be higher than the level plane of the ground. Of course, pushing off from a place other than the pitcher's plate is an illegal pitch.
- Noisemakers may not be used on the field of play or in the dugout. Musical instruments, bells, horns, whistles and loudspeaker systems are examples of noisemakers. Items outside the dugout are subject to the rules of the facility and the responsibility of game management. If those items become disruptive or unsporting the umpire should notify game management in order that the situation can be corrected.
- Softballs - Some schools are still having difficulty obtaining softballs due to supply chain issues. Please note that any softball with one of the marks found at Figure 1-4 (page 11) of the NFHS Rule Book may be used. There is no requirement for any OHSAA mark on the softball. **We will continue to follow this procedure as needed in the early rounds**

**of tournament play. If Rawlings softballs, normally used in OHSAA tournament play, are not available use a ball that includes the NFHS mark.**

- **Can a fielder block the base/plate without the ball?** Not if doing so impedes the runner's progress. Blocking the base/plate without the ball by itself is not a violation, but it should heighten an umpire's awareness and have them look closely at the runner's actions or possible reactions. Once that fielder that is blocking the base/plate causes the runner to be impeded, that fielder is now guilty of obstruction. Again, the key to the NFHS Softball obstruction rule is a runner being impeded by the fielder without possession of the ball or not making the initial play on a batted ball. If the umpire judges that the runner continued to follow their chosen path they were not impeded. If the umpire judges that the runner altered their chosen path due to the fielder, then they were impeded and obstruction should be ruled. A runner's reaction to a fielder without possession of the ball or making an initial play on a batted ball that would be considered an indication that they were impeded includes but is not limited to (note that many of these don't involve contact):

Altering their chosen path

Stopping

Having to step around the fielder

Retreating back to another base

Slowing down

Being contacted by the fielder

Stutter stepping

Sliding into the fielder

Here are some four common misconceptions about obstruction –

- **It is not obstruction as long as the fielder provides the runner access to the base.** This is an incorrect statement. Runners are allowed their chosen path to the base, if the runner is headed toward the front part of the base and the fielder causes that runner to alter their path or prevents them from touching the base the runner has been impeded and the fielder is guilty of obstruction.
- **You cannot award an obstructed runner a base they did not attempt to obtain.** This is an incorrect statement. If an obstructed runner does not reach the base they would have reached had there not been obstruction then the umpire should award the obstructed runner and all other runners affected by the obstruction the base(s) they would have reached had there been no obstruction. What base they would have reached is strictly umpire judgment. As an example, in a play where the BR hits a ball to the fence and gets tripped by F3 rounding first base and is only able to crawl back to first base. If the umpire judges they would have reached second base, third base or a home run had there been no obstruction, when the play is over the award would be the base which would have been reached. (Rule 8-4-3b PENALTIES 3)
- **An obstructed runner is always advanced at least one base as an award for being obstructed.** This is an incorrect statement. The intent of the rule is to erase the effects of the obstruction by awarding the runner the base that they would have reached without obstruction. By NFHS Softball rules, the base that the runner would have obtained had there not been obstruction is solely based on umpire judgement, there are no automatic awards. (Rule 8-4-3b PENALTIES)

- **If the runner obtains the base they would have reached had there been no obstruction there is no need to signal the obstruction.** This is an incorrect statement. Every time a runner is obstructed the umpire should verbalize “obstruction” and signal a delayed dead ball. Even if the runner obtains the base they would have reached, being consistent in calling the obstruction every time is critical. It alerts the defense that their actions are illegal and lets the offense know the umpire knows the rule and will make the call when it occurs. As an example, if R1 is leading off first base and returns to first F3 blocks their path and they have to side step to reach the base the umpire should signal and verbalize obstruction. Even though R1 returns safely, they were impeded and F3 is guilty of obstruction and that should be called every time it occurs.
- **Play Situation:** With R1 on first base and no outs, B2 hits a base hit that F7 quickly fields. R1 is obstructed by F6 after rounding second base. Seeing the umpire signal obstruction, R1’s coach instructs them to continue to third base where R1 is tagged out third base well before reaching third base. B2 advanced to second base when they saw R1 attempting to obtain third and is standing on second base when R1 is tagged out. When R1, the obstructed runner, is tagged out the umpire signals, verbalizes dead ball and awards R1 second base, sending B2 back to first base. The coach objects saying that R1 has to be awarded third base since B2 is standing on second base. The umpire informs the coach that in their judgment R1 would have only obtained second base had there not been obstruction so that is where R1 is placed and B2 is returned to first base.

**RULING:** Correct ruling. NFHS softball rules always awards the obstructed runner and each other runner affected by the obstruction the base or bases they would have reached had there not been obstruction. In a lot of situations awarded bases result in advancement of runners, but this is a case where the proper award is returning runners to a base already obtained. In this play, F7 has the ball just a few feet behind third base and R1 is obstructed just a few steps past second base. It is logical to believe and for the umpire to judge that if there was not obstruction R1 would have only obtained second base. The only reason R1 attempted to advance to third base was due to their coach instructing them to do so once they saw the obstruction call. Knowing that R1 could not be put out, (as long as they did not commit one of the exceptions in Rule 8-4-3b PENALTIES 1), between the two bases where they were obstructed (second and third) the worst case their runner faced is being returned to second base. However, having the runner continue to third provides them the chance to safely obtain third base if there was a bad throw or missed tag. As previously mentioned with the protection of obstruction between second and third bases the worst case is they are tagged out and returned to second base. Had there not been obstruction R1 would have stopped at second base and B2 would have been at first base, so returning B2 to first base is the proper placement in this situation as it is the base they would have reached had there not been obstruction. (8-4-3b)