



Ohio High School Athletic Association

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Softball Bulletin

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March 10, 2025

Bulletin 25 - 7

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- Topics in this message –

1) Plays and Situations from State Meetings, Mechanics Clinics and Correspondence

2) State Meeting Online – Deadline – March 25

3) Two Online Local Meetings will be available this year – late March and late April

4) Reminder – Future Changes to Umpire Uniform

- Thanks to all the umpires who attended our Mechanics Clinics – registration numbers across the state continue to increase – a 49% increase over the last two years. It's great to see that so many of umpires are working to improve their skills.
- The most significant rules change for 2025 allows a coach to use one way electronic communication from the dugout to the catcher while on defense. This is a permissive rule and use of this equipment is not required. The use of this one-way electronic communication will allow those who choose to embrace this technology an additional option to communicate with the catcher while on defense. The equipment used may be audio (such as an earpiece) or may be an item such as a smartwatch. Here are the four keys to remember:

**ONE WAY**

**FROM A COACH IN DUGOUT**

**TO CATCHER**

**WHILE ON DEFENSE**

The penalty for violations of this rule was clarified by NFHS after our White Book had been completed. Simply put these are the penalties:

**If a defensive player other than F2 receives a message, she is the person penalized.**

**If a coach communicates illegally with the catcher while on offense the coach is penalized.**

**If a coach communicates illegally with another player on offense both are penalized.**

You'll note that the NFHS rules prescribe an ejection for violations of this rule unless the umpire determines that the offense is minor in nature. After consulting with the NFHS and in the effort to have a consistent enforcement, our Ohio interpretation is that an offense is minor in nature only if the violation is discovered before a pitch is thrown. In this case no advantage has been gained. Once a pitch is thrown the offender, as identified above, shall be ejected from the contest and of course the required reports must be filed in order that the school can enforce the additional penalties involved with any ejection.

Here are several play situations that help with this rule change:

**SITUATION 1:** Team A's catcher is wearing an earpiece connected to a one-way communication device. During the second inning, the umpire can hear the coach communicating to the catcher instructing the catcher to (a) have F1 throw a drop ball, (b) have the defense play in for bunt coverage, or (c) following a pitch throw to third base to play on R1 who is leading off. **RULING:** Legal in all cases. One-way communication to the catcher on defense is legal. There is no restriction on when or what the coach communicates to the catcher while on defense. (1-8-6, 3-6-11)

**SITUATION 2:** As Team A takes the field, F2 notifies the coach that the one-way communication device being used is no longer working. Team A's coach notifies the umpire that the team's communication device has broken and requests the umpire to advise Team B coach that Team B can no longer use its one-way communication device. The umpire informs Team B that since Team A's device has broken, Team B can no longer use its communication device. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. There is no requirement that both teams have functional one-way communication devices. Team B would be allowed to continue to utilize its device even if Team A's device is broken. (1-8-6, 3-6-11)

**SITUATION 3:** During the fourth inning, Team B's catcher asks for time as the one-way communication device's battery needs replaced. The umpire does not allow F2 to take the device to the dugout; instead the umpire requires Teams B to wait until the inning is over. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. Although the umpire should not allow the game to have an extended delay due to one-way communication devices, the umpire should allow a nominal amount of time as with other equipment issues. For example, if a player needed to remove sunglasses and place them in the dugout or needed to reconnect a strap on a shin guard, a minimal amount of time would be allowed to do so. If additional time is needed the repair can be done between innings.

**SITUATION 4:** During the sixth inning of a game, the umpire notices that (a) the pitcher is receiving pitch calls through one-way communication from the coach, (b) the coach is using one-way communication to

the catcher while the team is on offense, or (c) F4 is receiving one-way communication from the coach while on offense. **RULING:** Penalties are assessed to the participant that violated the one-way communication rule. This would be the pitcher in (a), the coach in (b), both F4 and the coach in (c). These participants will be ejected unless the umpire determines the offense is minor in nature. (1-8-6, 3-6-11)

**SITUATION 5:** During the third inning of a game, Team A's coach informs the umpire that Team B's catcher is wearing an earpiece that has a microphone attached to it. The umpire agrees that the device does have a microphone and requires F2 to remove the device since it is capable of two-way communication. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. The rule states that one-way communication is allowed from the coach to the catcher while on defense. It does not limit the type of device that is used to perform this one-way communication. F2 is allowed to utilize this earpiece with the microphone, so long as it is only used to receive communication from the coach while on defense. This is no different from the catcher utilizing a smartwatch; most smartwatches are capable of two-way communication, but if the catcher only receives messages from the coach in the dugout (one-way communication), it is legal.

**SITUATION 6:** The coach of Team A has been restricted to the dugout for a violation of Rule 3-6. May that coach continue to communicate electronically with F2? **RULING:** A coach that is restricted to the dugout may continue to perform duties within the dugout. In the past a coach restricted to the dugout would be able to call pitches/plays by using hand signals or calling numbers from a playbook/playcard. Restricted activity has not changed so a coach would be allowed to continue to use the one-way communication to the catcher while their team is on defense from the dugout.

- Last year, the permanently affixed NOCSAE stamps on both the batting helmet and catcher's helmets were updated to match current production stamps. This year verbiage in the NFHS rules was updated to better describe the certification process in Rules 1-6-6 and 1-7-1. As with the change last year, this is information for currently produced products moving forward, older products that comply with the standards at the time of manufacture are still allowable in NFHS softball play. As a reminder, below is the interpretation from the 2024 NFHS Softball editorial change.

2024 SITUATION 5: During the first inning of a game, Team A's coach points out that Team B's batting helmets have the older NOCSAE stamp and do not have the current stamp shown in Figure 1-8. The umpire rules Team B is not allowed to use these helmets and can only use helmets with the new stamp as shown in the current 2024 NFHS Softball Rules Book. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. Figures 1-8 and 1-9 were updated to reflect the current NOCSAE stamp. The only change in this new stamp is the wording above the boxed area of the stamp. As long as the helmet has the correct helmet drawing (batting helmet shown in Figure 1-8 and catcher's helmet shown in 1-9) and the words "Meets NOCSAE Standard" inside the boxed area of the stamp, the helmet is allowed to be used. In addition, Team B must comply with the other requirements for helmets listed in Rule 1-6 for batting helmets and Rule 1-7 for catcher's helmets.

- **STATE MEETINGS**— In-person state meetings are complete. The online state meeting is available. Here are details that were emailed on February 4 concerning this meeting –

The state rules meeting is now live **on DragonFly!** To access it, please visit your 2024-25 registration page on DragonFly. This is the same page in which you have paid your renewal fees on. Once there, click on the requirement that is titled **"2025 SRI Meeting OHSAA Points of Emphasis"**. You will be able to watch the video on that screen.

To access this screen, you can click on **your name** on the left side of your DragonFly page, and then select **"My Info"**. From there, you will see a box labeled **"Prep for 2024-25 Official Eligibility"**. That is where you can find the meeting!

You will select **"Fill out form Electronically"**, and it will take you to a screen where the video is available. After watching the video, you will select **"Yes"** to the question asking if you have watched the video, as well as signing your name at the bottom.

**Please note:** You **MUST** sign your name and hit **"done"** on the screen to receive the credit. If you do not sign your name, your credit will not populate.

This meeting is open **without a \$50 late fee** until **Tuesday, March 25<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 PM.**

The meeting window will be up **with a \$50 late fee** from **Wednesday, March 26<sup>th</sup> until Tuesday, April 15<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 PM.**

**As a reminder, every official is required to attend at least one state rules meeting per year.**

**Loading Error Note:** If you are experiencing a loading error when trying to access the State Rules Meeting, try these steps:

If your page continues to spin without loading anything, and eventually a box with an "Exit Page" and "Wait" option, select the "Exit Page" option. It will take you to a "dead" page with a "reload" button in the middle. Select that button, and the meeting page should appear quickly.

We are working on fixing these errors, and I hope this helps you while the fixes are ongoing!

For any questions, please contact - [kjones@ohsaa.org](mailto:kjones@ohsaa.org).

- **REMINDER - UPCOMING CHANGES – UMPIRE UNIFORM** - The OHSAA wants to give all of our umpires advance notice that in the coming years we will be making a transition to have charcoal gray pants as our default color and eventually to become our only color for pants. This is primarily for two reasons – first, the charcoal shade seems to hold the color better without fading and second, as more and more baseball/softball organizations make this change it appears that many vendors are reducing the availability of heather gray pants. Also, as we make this transition, we will take the opportunity to use navy blue ball bags as our primary choice of color for that item. For umpires now making purchases of these items we suggest using this opportunity to make adjustments.