



Ohio High School Athletic Association

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Softball Bulletin

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THIS ISSUE OF THE SOFTBALL BULLETIN OPENS WITH SOME REMINDERS AND THEN CONTINUES WITH SOME ADDITIONAL UPDATES INCLUDING PLAY SITUATIONS AND RULINGS

- **Online Local Meetings** – as previously announced there will be two of these with one scheduled late March and one late April. Information for the first meeting was sent Tuesday afternoon, March 28. The meeting will be available until April 10 and attendance credit will be posted April 12. Thanks to George Gulas and Tom Hathaway our meeting presenters.
- **Rules Test** - The OHSAA is offering an optional exam for umpires who wish to improve their rules study and knowledge. The purpose of this test is to help umpires get in the rule book and improve their knowledge. This will also provide umpires with an opportunity to earn extra points for their tournament composite rating for the 2024 season. Information concerning this exam, along with instructions, was sent on Thursday morning, March 30. Please note the exam must be completed by April 21 and this date will not be extended. The link to the test is - <https://forms.office.com/r/qTmXN169h2>
Umpires who complete the optional rules test will receive additional point credit for their tournament officials rating based on their score as follows:
 - 94% and above - 3 points
 - 86% - 92% - 2 points
 - 80-84% - 1 point
- We are using new software for this test. Some of the programs used in the past are no longer available to us. Note that there is no “save” function with this software so plan to complete the test in one “sitting.” The first three questions cover, for obvious reasons, your name, permit number, and email address. Unfortunately, you will get no credit for answering these questions correctly! Questions 4-53 are the actual test and you will get two points for each correct answer. There will be no scores or answers released until after the test deadline. As can be expected there are some growing pains with the new software and test procedures. On Question #26 the second answer assumes a batted ball in flight over foul ground. On Question #29 the final sentence in the question portion was left off and is - The defensive coach now appeals that Batter

B3 has batted out of order. On Question #32 it's obvious that the words "the plate" should follow the word "toward". For Question #38 the first option should have these words added – "before passing a fielder (except the pitcher)". Thanks to those who pointed out these items. We hope to be adding you to our test writing team next year.

- Hold the date – Our Pre-Tournament Clinic will be held Sunday, May 7 at Waggoner Rd. Junior High School, 360 South Waggoner Rd. in Reynoldsburg. Registration will begin at noon and the clinic will conclude around 4PM. All OHSAA umpires our welcome. In addition to other information we will highlight the three umpire system used in our Regional and District games. This is always one of our highlight training programs with a big crowd – no reservations are needed.
- Bat Update - USA Softball, the certification body used by NFHS Softball to approve bats, has informed us that a bat has been placed into the market that bears the USA Certification mark, but has not completed the certification process. The manufacturer is Data Driven Athletics, and the bat model is PI 3.14159. Photos of the bat are shown below for reference. Until bats are certified by USA Softball, they are not compliant for use under NFHS softball rules. We will update if/when we receive more information. Our coaches were also notified about this last week.



- We receive many questions concerning obstruction. Here are some rulings from the NFHS office that will help cover several questions!

- Situation 1: R1 is on first base and leads off on the pitch. As R1 is returning to 1B, F3 moves toward the base blocking the front edge of the base causing R1 to alter their path while returning to the base. The base coach asks the umpire about F3 obstructing R1 and they inform the coach that there is no need to signal obstruction since R1 obtained the base they would have reached had there not been obstruction. RULING: Incorrect procedure. Although there may be no award/advancement for this obstructed runner, obstruction must be called (delayed ball signal and verbal of “obstruction”) every time that a defender impedes the progress of a runner without possession of the ball or not making an initial play on a batted ball. Consistency in making this call every time it occurs is critical to enforcement when a play results in awarding an obstructed runner the base they would have reached had there been no obstruction. If the umpire does not signal obstruction every time it occurs and only signals when the runner is put out and then they award that runner a base, the discussion with the defensive coach becomes much more difficult. This “routine” obstruction signal also does not have to be flashy or verbalized loudly, however it is necessary to signal so all can see and verbalized just loud enough for the runner, F3 and possibly the base coach to hear. (8-4-3b PENALTIES)
- Situation 2: With R1 on second base and no outs, B2 hits a deep fly ball to left field. As R1 is approaching home, F7 throws toward home but the throw is offline toward the fence drawing F2 into R1’s path resulting in contact between the two players. R1 recovers and is able to touch home without any issue. The plate umpire makes no signal, after the ball is dead the third base coach asks if F2 running into R1 was obstruction. The plate umpire tells the coach that since R1 was able to continue to home and score there was nothing. RULING: Incorrect ruling, incorrect procedure. Any time that a fielder not in possession of the ball or not making an initial play on a batted ball, impedes the progress of a runner that is legally running the bases obstruction has occurred. In this play, as soon as R1 was impeded (they slowed down, adjusted their path etc., any reaction R1 had to F2’s position or actions) obstruction occurred and should be signaled with a delayed dead ball signal and a verbal of “obstruction”. As with situation 1 above, consistently enforcing the rules by correctly indicating a violation has occurred (delayed dead ball signal and verbal) every time it happens is critical when the obstruction results in a runner being awarded a base. (8-4-3b, 8-4-3b Penalties)
- Situation 3: With R1 on first base and no outs, B2 hits a deep fly ball to left field. As R1 rounds second base and is headed to third base they are obstructed by F6. R1 is able to regain their footing and is put out on a close play sliding into third base, at this point B2 is two steps away from second base. When R1 is put out, the umpire signals and verbalizes, “Dead Ball that was obstruction this runner (pointing to R1) is awarded third base and that runner (pointing to B2) is awarded second base”. RULING: Correct ruling.

It is umpire judgement as to the base(s) that a runner would have reached had there not been obstruction. In this case, the umpire judged that R1 would have safely reached third base had there been no obstruction. Also as detailed in NFHS rules the obstructed runner and each other runner affected by the obstruction will be awarded the base or bases which would have been reached, in the umpire's judgment, had there not been obstruction. Since R1, the obstructed runner, was put out prior to reaching the base that would have been reached had there not been obstruction a dead ball is called. This dead ball, which was caused by enforcing the obstruction, affected B2 as they were kept from reaching second base. Due to B2 being affected by the obstruction they are awarded second base, the base the umpire judged they would have reached had there not been obstruction. (8-4-3b, 8-4-3b PENALTIES 1)

- Situation 4: With no runners on and the outfield playing shallow, B1 hits a deep fly ball that hits the outfield fence in flight. As B1 is rounding first base, F3 is standing near the base watching the outfielders run toward the ball. B1 and F3 collide near first base knocking B1 to the ground with F3 landing on top of B1; at this point, no fielder has reached the ball in the outfield. It takes several seconds for F3 and B1 to untangle, when B1 is able to regain their footing the ball is heading toward the infield and B1 returns to first base. The umpire rules that F3 obstructed B1 but since B1 did not attempt to advance past first base, the only possible award is first base. RULING: Incorrect ruling. When a runner is obstructed, the umpire must judge what base the runner would have reached had there not been obstruction. This judgment is based on a number of factors including the speed of the runner, the location of the ball vs the defender's proximity when obstruction occurs, etc. In this play, which base the obstructed runner returns to, should not factor into the umpire's judgement of which base they should be awarded. As stated, the umpire should judge what base the runner would have reached had there not been obstruction. In this situation with the ball still a ways past the defenders in the outfield and the obstruction delaying B1 for several seconds, the award is most likely at least second base. If the umpire judges B1 would have reached third base had there not been obstruction it is well within the rules for the umpire to award third base. Again, the base the runner would have reached had there not been obstruction is completely umpire judgment. (8-4-3b, 8-4-3b PENALTIES 3)
- We hope that you find the online meetings and optional test helpful as we move into the season!