



**OHIO HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION
PRESEASON GUIDE FOR SOFTBALL UMPIRES
“THE WHITE BOOK”**

2025 Edition

JERRY FICK - DIRECTOR OF OFFICIALS DEVELOPMENT – SOFTBALL

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Table of Contents

Welcome & Info from the DOD-----	page 3	Lineups, Substitutions & Penalties -----	18
Umpire Education Opportunities-----	5	Uniforms, State Tourney Umpires-----	20
2025 NFHS Rules Changes, POEs -----	7	Bat Rules and Penalties -----	21
OHSA Points of Emphasis -----	10	Sporting Conduct & Ejections-----	23
Notes for Assigners & Associations-----	11	OHSA Game Ending Procedures-----	24
OHSA Reminders -----	12	Rules, Lightning Policy, Help Wanted-----	26
Professionalism, Code of Ethics -----	14	Tips for Newer Umpires-----	27
Using the Slot Plate Mechanics-----	15	OHSA Mechanics Clinics-----	28
Umpire Standard Time -----	17	OHSA State Rules Meetings-----	31



Officials Needed !

GETTING REGISTERED IS EASY!



- Create a profile on myOHSAA.org
- Pay course or testing fee
- Complete required coursework
- Attend required local and state educational meetings each year
- Contact a local secretary
- Begin officiating, make your own schedule and have fun!



Welcome to the 2025 Softball Season

It's time for another softball season and I again look forward to another season as Director of Officials Development - Softball. There is no doubt that the part of the job I enjoy the most is working with our roughly 2,000 umpires and with the interpreters and other leaders in our 60 local associations. Over the past several years I had the pleasure to meet many of you at our clinics, state and local meetings, and during our tournaments. I hope to see you this year.

We have a big change coming in 2025 as our OHSAA Softball Tournaments move from four to seven divisions. This change means that we will be crowning three additional state champions plus twelve additional regional champions – all of whom will be joining us in Akron for state championship play. With the expansion from four to seven divisions of tournament play we will have 75% more state, regional and district games. This means more opportunities for our umpires and also a greater need to understand the three umpire system. Throughout the year we will be talking about ways we can meet the challenge of developing more umpires with this three umpire experience to provide the best product for our student athletes.

We have a number of other things that are new this year—the first of these is another update of the White Book, which provides highlights of NFHS rules and mechanics along with the OHSAA information that you'll need for the coming season. The goal is to put all of this information in one place and make it easily accessible for our umpires. It's important to note that unlike the OHSAA books provided in some other sports, this is NOT a replacement for the NFHS Softball Umpires Manual which you will continue to receive every other year (even numbered years). We continue to use NFHS Mechanics, the same as used in USA Softball. We are confident that the OHSAA customized content of the White Book will better serve you.

As mentioned in our EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITES section, the NFHS greatly enhanced the Softball Um-



Jerry Fick
Director of Officials
Development-Softball

pires Manual for the 2024 season. The number of pages has tripled and there is new information on base umpire starting positions, signals, definitions and mechanics terminology plus improved diagrams and expanded information on both the Two Umpire System (65 pages) and the Three Umpire System (80 pages). Additional information has been added to such topics as proper positioning, angles and distances, and using good timing. Note that the Softball Umpires Manual continues to be published and sent to you every other year. We'll continue to use this additional information as we place a great emphasis on mechanics in this year's local meetings, publications, and of course our Mechanics Clinics will have additional significance. It's our goal to continue making our umpires more proficient each season.

We will also continue our popular series of one-day Softball Umpire Mechanics Clinics. We were pleased to have a record attendance at the 2024 clinics with a 38% increase in participation vs. 2023. These clinics, designed to help umpires improve their skills and attain their advancement goals, continue to emphasize both plate and base mechanics. We have found that umpires with a strong knowledge of mechanics add greatly to the game of softball. Each clinic is staffed by the OHSAA Softball Umpire Instructional Team and will include OHSAA softball observers.

Again umpires attending these clinics will receive six points (10% of potential score of 60) added to their TOURNAMENT SELECTION SCORE. Details and registration information can be found near the final pages of this White Book or at the OHSAA officiating web page using this link: <http://www.ohsaa.org/Officiating/DOD>. Go to the softball section and click on Umpire Mechanics Clinics.

Publications Note

In addition to this White Book, the OHSAA Softball Mailing includes your NFHS publications - Rule Book, Case Book. Note that the Umpire Manual you received last year is good for the 2024 and 2025 seasons.

Continued on page 4

Umpires Achieving 25 Years of Service

We want to recognize officials completing 25 years of service as OHSAA softball umpires. Congratulations to all!

RANDY ADAMS..... Fairfield
MICHAEL ALSTON Columbus
RICK ANNEN Canton
LEIGHANN BAER Loveland
PATRICK BOWSHER..... Edgerton
SHANE CHAMBERLIN ...Wauseon
ALAN CLUNE St. Henry
TOM CONDON Lambertville
DAVID DEVELVIS Huntsville

MARVIN DOYLE
Lawrenceburg, Ind.
DANIEL DUIGNAN..... Uniontown
THOMAS GEYER Springfield
BRADLEY GLAZER
University Heights
FRANK GRASS..... Beach City
FRANK HUDSON Clyde
DAVID KASIK Strongsville
JAMES KROWKA..... N. Royalton
MICHAEL KUESTER.....
Bloomingtondale
LINDA LINDEMAN..... Willoughby
MICHAEL LYBARGER Shelby
ERIC MARKHAM Wellston

JESSE McWHORTER..... Cincinnati
GERALD McLEMORE..... Toledo
PAM MERCER..... Johnstown
STEPHEN NORRIS Westlake
STEVEN PIERACINI.....
Liberty Center
DAN ROGERS Mt. Gilead
PAM SCHULTZ..... Vandalia
PHILLIP SHERIDAN... Pleasant Hill
NEAL STOUT..... Cincinnati
JAMES THORNE..... Negley
ROBERT THURMAN, JR. Malta
DAVID TROWBRIDGE... Pataskala
RANDY WHITLATCH.....
Moundsville

Welcome cont. from page 3

We learned last year that many of our newer umpires (Class 1 and Class 2) were anxious to take advantage of these Mechanics Clinics, just as our veteran umpires have done in the past. They indeed provide a great supplement to the RefPreps classes offered to our newest umpires. **IN THIS YEAR'S CLINICS GROUPS WILL BE DIVIDED BASED ON EXPERIENCE LEVEL – THIS IS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR BOTH NEWER AND VETERAN UMPIRES TO WORK ON IMPROVING THEIR MECHANICS IN A SETTING THAT HELPS THEM BASED ON THEIR AMOUNT OF EXPERIENCE.**

These clinics will also include a presentation discussing expectations and what we look for in OHSAA Tournament Softball. With the expansion from four to seven divisions of tournament

play we will have 75% more state, regional and district games. This means more opportunities for our umpires and a greater need to understand and be able to successfully perform the duties needed for the three umpire system.

Uniform Update

I'm happy to say once again that there are no changes to the softball umpire uniform for 2024 but there are some clarifications for this year and some improvements coming in future years.

Although the OHSAA has an updated logo, the logo for officials uniforms is staying the same. We have made updates to our Handbook for Officials to reflect the change made in 2024—the approved navy blue knit cap with the OHSAA logo may be worn in lieu of the navy cap for cold weather situ-

ations. We've also clarified that the plate umpire may wear a short or long sleeve shirt and the base umpire could wear a jacket or vice versa.

I also want 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

Continued on page 5

Welcome cont. from page 4

umpires now making purchases of these items, we suggest using this opportunity to make adjustments.

Softball Official of the Year

Before further discussing the coming season I would like to congratulate, on behalf of the entire OHSA family and all of our officials, Pam Schultz. Pam, who lives in Vandalia in the Southwest District, has been an OHSA Softball Umpire for 24 years, and was the 2024 recipient of the National Federation OHIO OFFICIAL OF THE YEAR for softball. She has served as an OHSA tournament umpire at all levels and is very active as a member of both the Kettering and West Central Ohio Umpires Associations. Pam has also served both of her local associations as an instructor and in many other capacities. When you see Pam on the field please congratulate her and say thanks for her many contributions to the OHSA.

Pam was honored at the Officials Hall of Fame Banquet in June. In addition, veteran softball umpires Rick Keys and Rick Merb were inducted into the 35th class of the OHSA Officials Hall of Fame. Rick Keys is from Lancaster and has been a tournament official in several sports. He is a 29-year official, past president of the Hub of Ohio Umpires Association and worked four state softball tournaments. Rick Merb is from McDermott and also has been a tournament official in four sports. Rick has spent 32 years on the softball diamonds of Southeast Ohio and worked eight state softball tour-

This Year's Education Opportunities

■ The White Book has again been updated – it is your OHSA Preseason Guide replaces the NFHS Preseason Guide – ALL INFORMATION IN ONE PLACE.

■ Five Mechanics Clinics – One in each OHSA District (E/SE Combined) - Attendees will also receive SIX points added to their TOURNAMENT SELECTION SCORE. Last year, we learned that many of our newer umpires were as anxious as our veterans to take advantage of our Mechanics Clinics. These clinics provide a great supplement to the RefPreps classes offered to our newest umpires. **IN THIS YEAR'S CLINICS GROUPS WILL BE DIVIDED BASED ON EXPERIENCE LEVEL – THIS IS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR BOTH NEWER AND VETERAN UMPIRES TO WORK ON IMPROVING THEIR MECHANICS IN A SETTING THAT HELPS THEM BASED ON THEIR AMOUNT OF EXPERIENCE.**

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■ The NFHS greatly enhanced the Softball Umpires Manual for the 2024 season. This book is published every other year in the even numbered years. The number of pages has tripled and there is new information on base umpire starting positions, signals, definitions and mechanics terminology plus improved diagrams and expanded information on both the Two Umpire System (65 pages) and the Three Umpire System (80 pages). Additional information has been added to such topics as proper positioning, angles and distances, and using good timing. With this additional information we will be placing a great emphasis on mechanics in this year's local meetings, publications, and of course our Mechanics Clinics mentioned above will have additional significance. It's our goal to make our umpires even more proficient in 2025. The 80 pages on the Three Umpire System is a must for those working games at the District Tournament level and beyond. Remember that there will be a large increase in the number of these games for 2025 – this is a result of the increase in divisions from four to seven.

■ Another great way to start your preparation for the coming season is to attend a "face-to-face" State Rules Interpretation Meeting. There will be seven in person meetings. Each meeting will feature sessions of about two hours and in addition to the state meeting will review the most important items that we want to cover prior to the season. By attending the entire session, you will receive credit for a local meeting in addition to the state softball meeting. There is no need to pre-register for any State meeting. Information concerning attendance requirements is on the back cover of this booklet.

naments. He has held every officer position in the Portsmouth Football, Baseball and Softball Associations.

We also want to recognize officials completing 25 years of service as OHSA softball umpires. These umpires, along with those who

worked our State Tournament in Akron, are listed elsewhere in the White Book. Again, roughly one third of our state tournament umpires were making their first appearance at this event and that is no doubt a result of many of these

Continued on page 6

Welcome cont. from page 5

umpires attending our Mechanics Clinics and working hard to improve at their craft. **Congratulations to all!**

This is the 15th year of the OHSA's program to provide officials with additional training and you the opportunity to improve your "game". The OHSA Board of Directors continues to direct substantial resources to enhance training programs for all officials. We need your help as we continue to strengthen officiating in Ohio. We expect your support of our efforts to follow playing rules and the approved umpire mechanics. These cannot be optional—either for individual umpires or local associations. Consistency is something the game, coaches, players, and your fellow umpires all deserve. Our simple goal: ONE RULE/ONE INTERPRETATION/ONE MECHANIC.

To further increase consistency we continue our enhanced training opportunities for umpires. Details concerning attendance requirements, as well a schedule of our state meetings, can be found on the back cover of the White Book.

We will again offer a pre-tournament clinic covering the three umpire system, plus more, on Sunday, May 4 at Waggoner Road Junior High School in Reynoldsburg. This free clinic is intended for umpires working in postseason play but is open to all OHSA umpires. No preregistration is needed. Registration will be at noon with the clinic running from 12:30-4 PM. With our expanded tournament format

this clinic is now more important and valuable than it has ever been before. Save the date and watch for reminders in our weekly bulletins.

Weekly Bulletins

We will continue to provide bulletins distributed electronically throughout the season. These bulletins are also posted at www.ohsaa.org (Go to the Officials Page – DOD Section). The direct link is: <http://www.ohsaa.org/Officiating/DOD>. The comments we received have been very positive and if umpires have suggestions to improve these further, please let me know.

Also ongoing is the use of observers at our state and regional tournaments. Thanks to the many wonderful volunteers, we had observers last year at all of our regional and state championship sites as well as some district games. These observers not only help the umpires working these games but their input is very helpful in identifying areas where we need to focus our training efforts. I believe that if umpires working tournament games have areas that consistently show up as improvement items, it's likely that these can be improvement items for all umpires. It is also important to note that our observers play a key role in determining future tournament assignments.

Other Methods to Improve

Please take the time to review all your NFHS and OHSA publications including the entire White Book. In addition to valuable information being provided regard-

ing rules changes, points of emphasis, and mechanics, the publications provide information especially for our OHSA umpires. This includes emphasis points on safety issues which must be reviewed by all involved in high school sports. **I also urge you carefully study the OHSA REMINDERS FOR 2025 as this section contains very important information that we all need to know.**

This season, let's continue to work on recruiting and retention efforts—especially in regard to females and minorities. We have not had much success in recruiting female and minority umpires and ask for your help with this. In many areas, our assigners are having trouble filling games. Our umpires are the best recruiting source we have. If you know of anyone interested give them this address: <http://www.ohsaa.org/Officiating/permits>. Here they will find the information they need to join a class. After completing the online course and testing, our local associations will work to help each new umpire with on field mechanics and get the help they need to be successful. **Please encourage your friends and neighbors to get involved!**

As this booklet is printed in time for your rule book mailing, keep in mind that additional information will be provided online and through our Bulletins as the season progresses. Please watch for updates which are shared when available.

Have a great season – I hope to see you on the field!

Jerry Fick
Director of Officials Development
– Softball

NFHS POINTS OF EMPHASIS – 2025

TEAMS' ROLE IN PACE OF PLAY

Coaches play a vital role in creating and maintaining pace-of-play standards for their individual players and teams. Every effort should be made to educate players on the rules involved and the timing protocols related to breaks between innings, as well as during gameplay.

Between innings, 60 seconds is provided for (a) the defense to take the field and throw warm-up pitches, and (b) the offense to prepare to bat. There are several ways that coaches can expedite this process with simple instructions to players. For example, if the catcher was batting when the third out was made, have another teammate or coach prepared to receive warm-up pitches while the catcher gets equipped. For the team coming to bat, coaches should encourage their lead-off batter to gather their batting



equipment while the remainder of the team huddles in an appropriate area that doesn't pose a safety risk for the defense warming up.

There are prescribed penalties associated with excessive time between innings.

- Once the allowed 60 seconds has passed, the offensive team has 10 seconds for its batter to enter the batter's box (NFHS Rule 7-3-1).

- Similarly, once the allowed 60 seconds has passed, the pitcher has 20 seconds to legally deliver a pitch (NFHS Rule 6-2-3). The respective

penalties for violations of these time constraints are either a strike or a ball on the batter, depending on the tardy party.

These same time constraints exist on each pitch thrown. Once the ball has been returned to the pitcher to prepare for the next pitch, the pitcher has 20 seconds to release the pitch. Coaches who delay in calling pitches risk a penalty for exceeding the allowed 20 seconds. The same applies to the offense when a batter fails to enter the batter's box within 10 seconds after the ball is returned to the pitcher.

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

Participant well-being should be a priority for all those involved in game management. Coaches and umpires can help minimize risk and injury to players by under-

Continued on page 9

NFHS RULES CHANGES – 2025

There is only one major change in the NFHS playing rules for the 2025 season. Coaches may now communicate electronically with their catchers. This involved changing Rule 1-8-6 to allow one-way communication from the coach (or someone on the bench) to the catcher. However, this communication is limited with Rule 3-6-11 altered to specify a penalty should the coach use the device to communicate to anyone other than the catcher.

The complete summary of 2025 rule changes:

1-8-6 EXCEPTION & PENALTY: A high school softball coach is now able to use electronic devices in the dugout for one-way communication to the catcher while the team is on defense. The penalty from Rule 3-6-11 was added to Rule 1-8-6 as well, with violators subject to ejection unless the offense is ruled to be of a minor nature.

Rationale: The committee has made these changes to

support the use of emerging technology within the sport of softball. Being a permissive rule, the use of this one-way electronic communication will allow those who choose to embrace the technology an additional option to communicate with the catcher while on defense.

3-6-11: This rule change specifies that coaches are prohibited from using the device to communicate with any other team member while on defense or any team member while on offense and the coach cannot use the device outside the dugout/bench area.

Rationale: Clarifies that a coach may use an electronic device for one-way communication to the catcher while the team is on defense.

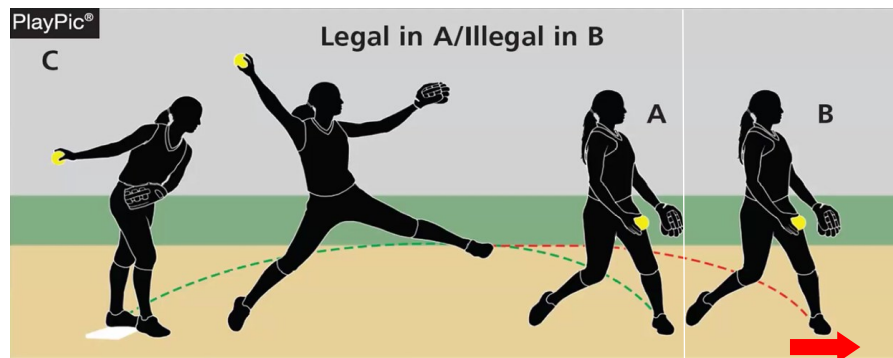
9-3-2b: When a baserunner is declared out for being hit by a fair batted ball, the batter-runner is credited with a fielder's choice in the scorebook.

Rationale: This change corrects an error in the rules book that awarded a base hit in this instance.

NFHS Clarifies Replant Definition—Rule 2-47

There is a very important and helpful editorial change to Rule 2-47 this year. The definition of a replant has been further clarified. The rulebook language, with added words both in bold and italics, is: A replant of the pivot foot occurs when the pitcher pushes off the playing surface from anywhere other than the pitcher's plate **resulting in the non-pivot foot becoming closer to home plate** prior to the act of delivering the pitch.

This additional phrase is designed to more clearly explain exactly what a replant is and better align this definition with the description of the pitch given in Rule 6-1-2c. Often the pitcher has one or both feet landing (either from a leap or a drag) on the playing surface at about the same time as the pitch is delivered. At times, her momentum may cause her pivot foot to continue moving



In A the pitcher is legal. The stride foot was on the ground or landed after the leap but did not move forward. In B the pitcher is illegal. After landing on her pivot foot she pushes off a second time with her pivot foot from a spot in front of the pitcher's plate and as a result her non-pivot foot moves closer to home plate.

forward. This movement alone is not a replant and not a violation of the pitching rule – a replant occurs only when she pushes off from this spot in front of the pitcher's plate and there

is resulting forward movement of the non-pivot foot prior to the act of delivering the pitch.

Continued on page 9

A Look Back at the 2024 Rules Changes and Points of Emphasis

As we prepare for the 2025 softball season, it might be helpful to take a look back at some of the NFHS rules changes that were enacted in 2024.

1-8-6: The rule edit continues to require that electronic devices for coaching purposes (i.e. video, photos) can only be used in the dugout but does not require that the information originate from the dugout. The electronic information may be transmitted to the dugout from anywhere outside of live ball area.

3-2-3: Beginning January 1, 2027, uniforms may only bear a single manufacturer's logo, school name, school logo, mascot and/or the participant's name. Advertisements, messages, team slogans, etc., will no longer be allowed.

3-2-5: Removed restrictions for headbands and ribbons. Headbands and ribbons may be any color or design.

3-2-7: If worn, a player's wristband with a playbook/playcard must be worn on the player's wrist or arm. If worn by the pitcher, the wristband with a playbook/playcard must be worn on the non-

pitching wrist or arm. It remains legal for players to keep the wristband with a playbook/playcard in their back pocket.

4-2-7, 10-2-3e, h: The umpire may call (end) a game if conditions in or around the facility become unacceptable to safely continue the game.

6-1-2c, 2-47: The pitcher may have both feet off the ground at the same time as long as both feet remain within the 24-inch width of the pitcher's plate and the pitcher does not replant the pivot foot. A definition for the replant was added.

NOTE– PLEASE SEE OHSAA POINTS OF EMPHASIS SECTION OF WHITE BOOK FOR 2025 RULE CHANGE CLARIFYING THIS DEFINITION.

6-2-2: Pitchers shall only use dirt, powdered rosin or comparable drying agents that are listed on the USA Softball's certified equipment webpage to dry the hand.

Points of Emphasis

Among the 2024 NFHS Points of Emphasis that merit review in 2025:

Game Management

Coach and umpire communication should be conversational, not confrontational. Passion for their team is often the root of fiery responses from coaches about plays or rulings that they felt went against their team. As an umpire, it is important to balance an understanding of the passion coaches hold for their teams and the sporting expectations of education-based athletics. There has to be a mutual respect for each other and a professionalism that is followed by both coaches and umpires to maintain the working relationship that is imperative to have a successful game. Listening to understand a coach's issue so you can properly respond to their concerns is a huge part of defusing the situation. Maintaining a calm demeanor when speaking to the coach also often helps to lower the temperature of the conversation and assists in having a more meaningful discussion. Another helpful tool for the umpire is utilizing rule book terminology to help keep discussions on

Continued on page 9

2025 NFHS POEs
cont. from page 7

standing and enforcing existing bench and field conduct rules. NFHS rules stipulate that once the game has begun, only the batter, runner(s), on-deck batter, coaches in the coach's box, bat/ball shaggers or one of the nine players on defense are permitted to be outside the designated dugout/bench or designated warm-up areas (i.e. batting cage or bullpen). Additionally, during game play, hitting the ball to teammates on defense is prohibited. Between innings, bench personnel are permitted to engage in throwing and running activities.

BE AWARE OF HAZARDS

Field structure and dugout protection vary from facility to facility.

Team personnel should assess and be aware of potential hazards associated with foul balls and overthrows. For example, if a bullpen is in an area where a foul ball or overthrow could contact the pitcher or catcher, the team might assign bench personnel with a glove to stand nearby to shield those warming up.

On-deck batters should be mindful of potential foul balls and overthrows and be prepared to move as necessary to avoid contact. On-deck batters must use the on-deck circle closest to their own dugout. (NFHS Rule 7-5-1).

A Look Back at 2024 Rules
Changes/POEs cont. from page 8

topic and achieve resolution more quickly. Another key aspect of game management is managing the flow of the game. In 2023, NFHS had a point of emphasis about the 60 seconds between innings. Although umpires are not there to "rush" players, one of the responsibilities of an umpire is to help maintain a good flow of the game. This can be done without being overly aggressive, often just a simple "here we go" or "let's get ready to play red" is all the encouragement that a team needs to know that it is time to get back to playing. Utilizing these simple reminders during each half inning as well as during charged conferences can help make sure a good game flow is maintained.

Unacceptable Conditions

Umpire jurisdiction is limited to the confines of the field of play. Items outside of the field of play, like spectator behavior, is monitored and controlled by event management. Absent a designated event manager, the home team's head coach assumes this responsibility. Most spectator behavior never reaches a level that would be considered dangerous or severe enough to cause a concern for participant safety. However, if conditions become unacceptable for play due to spectator conduct, umpires have the authority to call (end) the contest. Again, this is a very rare occurrence and all attempts should be made to have event management control the situation prior to ending a contest.

In addition to spectator behavior, other external conditions could result in the umpire having to call (end) the contest. For example, at the start of a game, a wildfire might be a safe distance with winds carrying the smoke away from the field. If these conditions change and result in conditions becoming unacceptable for play, it may result in an umpire having to call (end) the game.

Unreported vs. Illegal Substitutions

An illegal substitute is a player who is ineligible to occupy a position in the lineup. This can occur when a player:

- Enters or re-enters the game without eligibility to do so (illegal re-entry).
- Re-enters the game in the wrong position in the batting order.
- Is the (F.P.) FLEX and enters the game as a batter or runner in a different position in the batting order than the DP.
- Violates the courtesy runner rule.

All of these violations result in an illegal sub-

stitution and the penalties for offensive violations are defined in Rule 3-4-2 and penalties for defensive violations are detailed in Rule 3-4-3. Along with additional penalties, one consistent penalty for all possible violations is the illegal substitute is restricted to the dugout for the remainder of the game on the first offense.

In contrast to an illegal substitute, an unreported substitute is a player that could legally occupy the position they are in the lineup but has simply failed to report that they are entering the game. All substitutions and courtesy runners are required to be reported to the plate umpire upon entering the game. When a player enters the game unreported, a warning is issued to the head coach. Any subsequent violation results in both the head coach and player being restricted to the dugout for the remainder of the game.

Pitching Mechanics: Replant

The allowance for both feet to disengage from the playing surface while delivering a pitch has increased the concern about pitching mechanics involving a replant of the pivot foot. A replant during the delivery would result in an illegal pitch. To help assist in enforcement of this rule, a new definition of replant was created. Rule 2-47 now defines that a replant of the pivot foot occurs when the pitcher pushes off the playing surface from anywhere other than the pitcher's plate prior to the act of delivering the pitch. With this definition in mind, it is an illegal action if the pitcher slides the foot forward past the pitching plate pushing off to start their movement from a position in front of the pitching plate (no part of their foot is still in contact with or over the pitching plate). Another common action, often referred to as "closing the hip," is pushing with the pivot foot while delivering the pitch. Depending on the pitching style, the pitcher will either bring the pivot foot forward to square up toward the batter or the pitcher will tuck the pivot foot behind the non-pivot foot. This push is during the act of delivering the pitch and is legal. **NOTE – Rule 2-47 has been included in the editorial changes for 2025 to add even more clarity – please see information found elsewhere in this publication.**

OHSAA SPFTBALL POINTS OF EMPHASIS—2025

Pitching Rules Enforcement – The OHSAA continues to have expectations concerning the enforcement of all rules including the pitching rules. These expectations have not changed and are straightforward and reasonable but still require our attention:

- Study the pitching rules
- Learn to recognize infractions
- Use proper positioning & mechanics
- When an illegal pitch is there call it
- Never guess an illegal pitch
- Make these calls early in the game
- Let the pitcher adjust to your proper enforcement of the rule

We will discuss these, along with key provisions of the pitching rules, during our state and local meetings. Remember that “leaping,” defined as both feet airborne prior to delivering the pitch is **NOW LEGAL** in high school play. It’s also important to note that a replant of the pitcher’s pivot foot from anywhere other than the pitcher’s plate is still an illegal pitch.

There is actually a very important and helpful editorial change to Rule 2-47 this year. The definition of a replant has been further clarified. The rule-book language, with added words both in bold and italics, is: A replant of the pivot foot occurs when the pitcher pushes off the playing surface from anywhere other than the pitcher’s plate ***resulting in the non-pivot foot becoming closer to home plate*** prior to the act of delivering the pitch. This additional phrase is designed to more clearly explain exactly what a replant is and better align this definition with the description of the pitch given in Rule 6-1-2c. Often the pitcher has one or both feet landing (either from a leap or a drag) on the playing surface at about the same time as the pitch is delivered. At times, her momentum may cause her pivot foot to continue moving forward. This movement alone is not a replant and not a violation of the pitching rule—a replant occurs only when she pushes off from this spot in front of the pitcher’s plate and there is



resulting forward movement of the non-pivot foot prior to the act of delivering the pitch. This clarification should make this rule even more clear not only for umpires but for coaches and participants as well. It also aligns with what we discussed in our meetings last year. We will continue to cover this in our 2025 meetings.

In addition we will repeat again the requirement for the pitcher to take a position in contact with the pitcher’s plate and then simulate taking a signal from the catcher prior to bringing the hands together. This allows the batter to prepare for the start of the pitch. If the pitcher does not pause after stepping onto the pitcher’s plate to simulate taking a signal from the catcher prior to bring their hands together, an illegal pitch needs to be called.

OHSAA and NFHS Rules – All games played must be played under NFHS playing rules including the authorized OHSAA rules modifications. Leagues and conferences, schools, coaches, and umpires are not permitted to allow playing rule deviations. This includes items such as equipment, the ball–strike count, OHSAA adopted game ending procedures and OHSAA regulations concerning forfeited and protested games.

Umpire Mechanics – The NFHS Softball Umpires Manual has been expanded in an effort to make it more valuable to all umpires—the use of the new manual will be a great advantage. We are placing an additional emphasis on mechanics and will be updating our Mechanics Clinics to support this emphasis. In particular, we have learned that this program can benefit both newer umpires and our veterans—last year we had an increase in the number of umpires taking advantage of the clinics and many of those attending were newer umpires. These clinics provide a great supplement to the RefPreps classes offered to our newest umpires.

Continued on page 11

The groups in these clinics will be divided by experience level this year. Those who attend these clinics will receive **SIX POINTS** added to their tournament score as we further recognize the importance of proper mechanics.

Among the items discussed elsewhere in this White Book are proper calling position and techniques for plate umpires calling balls and strikes, and the importance of umpires taking their time and not rendering decisions too quickly. Of special concern this year is our Base Umpire Mechanics and Positioning—we have had some confusion reported concerning base umpire positioning and proper depth with runners on base.

Base umpires are to be deeper than the infielders and not directly behind an infielder but away and to the side (we sometimes call this “off the fielder”) from the middle infielder normally shading to the side of the lead runner. There are times a middle infielder may be playing further over in one direction and in this case the umpire may need to move to the opposite side. We want umpires to be deep enough, but not deeper than necessary, to see the pitcher, batter, and all runners and to allow the fielders freedom of movement. It’s important to not be too deep in order that when the ball is hit to the outfield umpires can move inside the diamond as quickly as possible to cover multiple bases and have all elements of any play in front of the umpire.

It’s important when coming inside the diamond to move only to a position 10-to-12 feet inside the baseline. This allows the base umpire to turn quickly while picking up the ball, glancing at the runner(s), and letting the ball take the umpire to the play. Starting out too close to the fielders can cause the umpire to hinder fielders and runners. Starting out too deep and/or pivoting too far inside the diamond can prevent the umpire from quickly picking up the ball being thrown to the infield and getting good position to rule on a play. This is all a very difficult task but is necessary to make for the best possible judgment calls. We will emphasize this point in our meetings and clinics this winter.

Notes for Assigners and Local Associations

A message to all who hold BOTH a baseball and softball permit and also to local association secretaries. OHSAA requires umpires holding permits in both sports to attend four local meetings for each sport (i.e. four local meetings for baseball and four local meetings for softball). Local associations are not permitted to offer meetings that give credit for both sports. There is one exception that allows each local association to conduct one meeting that covers OHSAA regulations and other items common to both sports. Umpires may attend only one such meeting and will receive dual credit for a meeting in both baseball and softball. All local associations offering these “dual credit” meetings may offer only one such meeting per year and will be required to follow a program provided by the OHSAA.

Umpire Advancement

All umpires assigned to varsity games must be Class 1 officials. If umpires have not completed the advancement process, this is done by completing the application form and following the instructions included on that form which is found at:

<https://ohsaaweb.blob.core.windows.net/files/Officiating/forms/UpgradeApplication.pdf>

This process can be completed as early as an umpire’s first year and then can take effect the following season. More help can be obtained through your local association secretary.

Local Associations are encouraged to help umpires through the advancement process—this is a key responsibility of the association. Please work to insure umpires receive the required observations during the season and also are prepared for the advancement test given in May. An umpire who completes the advancement process is eligible to work both regular season varsity and tournament games, therefore the testing is a little more challenging than testing for new umpires and can also include some questions on the basics of three umpire mechanics.

OHSAA REMINDERS

RULES

Noisemakers - The use of any item to create additional noise is a violation of the unsporting conduct regulation. Noisemaking devices are not permitted in the dugout. This would include musical instruments, whistles and horns. It is also not permissible to bang items such as ball buckets or bang bats on dugouts, benches or fences. Note that the penalty for violations of this rule permits a “warning,” but for repeated violations the umpire may “restrict to the bench” or eject either the coach or offender (s). Umpires should first use warnings to enforce this rule.

Sweatshirts/Jackets - Rule 3-2-1 allows state associations to permit players to wear sweatshirts and jackets when there is inclement weather. This rule has been adopted in Ohio.

Rule Books - We must have rule books available and consult those publications when needed during the course of a game. Be prepared to check the books and explain the proper ruling to the coach. We continue to have a few unfortunate situations each year where rules are misapplied and not corrected. The OHSAA does not recognize protests so it is imperative that we refer to the books when needed and make corrections if necessary. I think that we can all agree that when the umpires in a game disagree on a rules application there is no reason not to check a rule before we award the wrong base, fail to count a run that should have scored or make some other rules misapplication.



Head Decorations/Headwear/Religious Apparel – Regardless of NFHS Playing rules, state law requires that officials/contest administrators not prohibit or create any obstruction to wearing religious apparel when competing or participating in interscholastic athletics, unless a legitimate danger to participants is identified due to wearing religious apparel. If such a danger is identified, the administrator or official of the event or activity shall offer all reasonable accommodations to the participant wearing religious apparel.

Dugout Personnel must remain in the dugout. This includes coaches, players, and other team personnel. Rule 3-6-6 offers limited exceptions such as bat/ball shaggers (wearing helmets) who are retrieving discarded bats or foul balls that may be hit well off the field and down the foul lines. This exception does not cover foul balls or other loose balls near a fielder or behind home plate. Defensive coaches are not permitted to take positions outside the dugout for the purpose of signaling pitches. Offensive coaches on the field must take

positions within the coach’s box.

Substitution Rules and Line Up

Card Management – This is an area where softball rules provide some complexities. In an effort to assist umpires, Tom Hathaway of Cincinnati, a long time instructor and member of our Softball Umpire Improvement Team has developed a **DP Flex Chart** which includes various actions and results for the Flex rule. Tom has also authored an article covering **Lineups, Substitutions and Penalty Enforcement**. Each of these items can be found elsewhere in this White Book and I’m sure they will be helpful to all of us. I also remind you that Appendix H (page 98) of the NFHS 2025 Softball Rules Book is a valuable DP/Flex resource. These are great topics for local meetings as well. It is important to note the substitution and batting order rules for Junior High/Middle School (Grades 7 and 8) games are the same as the high school rules (the only rules difference for Grades 7 and 8 is the pitching distance). There is no “roster batting” permitted for junior high/middle school.

Game Management – Umpires know that their responsibility is for what happens on the field. Game administration and site management is a school responsibility. This is important for a number of reasons—weather issues, the rare case of spectators causing problems that need attention, or other emergencies. Prior to the game, no later than the pregame conference with the coaches, find out if

Continued on page 13

Reminders cont. from page 12

game management is available or if the head coach is filling that role. In the spring there are often many events going on at a school and this forces the coach to take this responsibility. In any event, umpires need to know who to go to should assistance become necessary. See our updates to our weather regulations elsewhere in this White Book.

Please note this excerpt from the OHSAA Bylaws: **School's Responsibility When Hosting A Contest 3**

-2-1 The host school has the responsibility to ensure that a contest or event is administered in a manner which emphasizes the educational values inherent in interscholastic athletics. It is the host school's responsibility to remove any individual(s) who disrupts the educational goals of the contest or event. Likewise, the host school is ultimately responsible for the safety of all participants (players, coaches, officials, spectators, etc.) in the interscholastic contest immediately before, during and immediately after each contest or event. Therefore, the host school shall appoint a site director/ manager or administrator-in-charge for every contest or event. The host school shall ensure that the site director/ manager or administrator-in-charge is aware of the school's emergency action plan and how to adjust it to meet the needs of the particular contest or event. Included in the emergency action plan shall be procedures to deal with emergencies, crowd management and health and safety protections. The plan shall also include procedures to ensure that unauthorized personnel are kept

from the playing field; to provide safety and security for the visiting team(s), their spectators and the contest officials, and to provide safety and security for parking areas related to the contest or event.

MECHANICS

George Gulas, our state interpreter from Medina, has again put together a list of observations from our observers and others who have watched many, many games over the past seasons. These items will be the basis for much of our Mechanics Clinics, content at our state meetings, and of course will be passed on to interpreters for discussion at local meetings. Here is a preview of some of the items we will be working on this winter and spring:

- **Plate Umpires** – Proper Position including Slot and Distance – Reporting Changes – Handling Intentional Walks – Fair/Foul Position, Priorities, Signals - Selling the tough calls vs. making unnecessary calls.
- **Base Umpires** – Proper Initial Positions getting set and square to the plate – Tighter Pivots when coming inside diamond – Chasing Balls to the outfield including when to chase, proper angles, and signals.
- **General Mechanics** – Between Inning responsibilities - Communication through good signals – Don't take the easy way out – Keys to Good Judgment - Getting good angles, Timing, and STOP, SET,

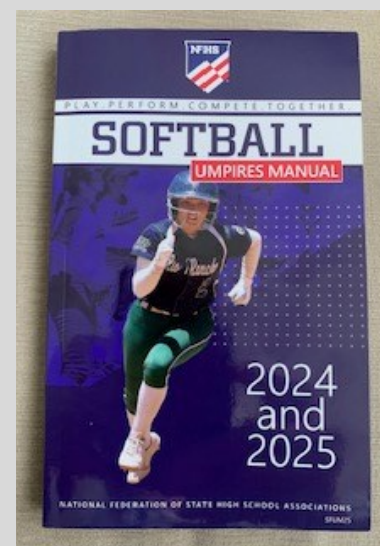
SEE THE PLAY, MAKE THE CALL

- Working the final play of every game – communication with partners and expect the unexpected – it's not always over when you think it is

Now is the time to plan to take advantage of both our Mechanics Clinics and Face to Face State Rules Meetings with the second hour (local meeting credit) devoted to items such as those mentioned above. Work in these areas will help improve the capabilities of all of our umpires.

New NFHS Umpires Manual

Your rulebook mailing from the OHSAA in 2024 contained the new NFHS Umpires Manual. This is a new, larger and more detailed book with ample diagrams to enhance mechanics training, perfect for local rules meeting discussions and umpire pregame meetings. You will find some references to the manual in this and other articles.



A Word About Professionalism

In addition to the focus on the student, we reprint our Code of Ethics, remind everyone of the importance of honoring our commitments and contracts regardless of possible inconvenience or financial loss, and also discuss the importance of being careful about what we say both verbally and in social media.

The OHSAA's Mission Statement is simple and to the point but also speaks volumes: *To serve our member schools and enrich interscholastic opportunities for students.*

The OHSAA's Officiating Program Mission does the same: *Creating a competent community of sports officials who play a key role in developing Ohio student athletes into good citizens of tomorrow.*

As officials it's pretty easy for us to get caught up in what we do on a daily basis and forget the function that we really need to play in each and every contest and in all that we do as OHSAA officials. With this mind we are taking this opportunity to remind ourselves of our role as part of interscholastic athletics and the importance of professionalism. Each of the statements above properly create the focus that is appropriately placed on the student.

OHSAA Officiating Code of Ethics

Schools have entrusted the OHSAA and sports officials to assist them in the education and development of their youth through athletics. The proper operation of such a process requires that officials be independent, impartial and responsible to people they serve. In recognition of these expectations there is hereby established a Code of Ethics for all officials. The purpose of the code is to establish guidelines for ethical standards of conduct for all officials.

- An Official must devote time, thought and study to the rules of the game and the mechanics necessary to carry out these rules so that one may render effective and creditable service in a fair and unbiased manner.
- An Official must work with fellow officials and the state association in a spirit of harmony and cooperation in spite of differences of opinion that may arise during debate of issues.
- An Official must resist every temptation and outside pressure to use one's position as an official to benefit oneself. Under all circumstances, officials must avoid promoting the special interest of any person or group of persons other than the athletes we serve.
- An Official must constantly uphold the honor and dignity of the officiating industry in all personal conduct and relations with student-athletes, coaches, athletic directors, school administrators, colleagues, and the public, to be a worthy example to the athletes under one's jurisdiction.
- An Official will be prepared both physically and mentally, dress according to expectations of sport standards, and maintain a proper appearance that is befitting the importance of the game.
- An Official shall avoid the use of tobacco and tobacco products at the contest site.
- An Official shall not consume alcohol (or any illegal/illicit drug or controlled substance) prior to or during the contest.
- An Official must remember and recognize that it is important to honor contracts regardless of possible inconvenience or financial loss. Every member of the officiating profession carries a responsibility to act in a manner becoming a professional person. The conduct of any official influences the attitude of the public toward the profession in general as well as toward the official in particular.
- An Official shall not delay the process of completing and returning paperwork provided by a site needed to process the game payments and will provide a W-9 when requested.

Note – The OHSAA Officiating Code of Ethics, along with OHSAA regulations relating to officials is found in Handbook for Officials. It may be accessed at this link: <https://www.ohsaa.org/Portals/0/Officiating/>

Get Your Head Right

Using the Slot to Get the Most Accurate Strike Zone

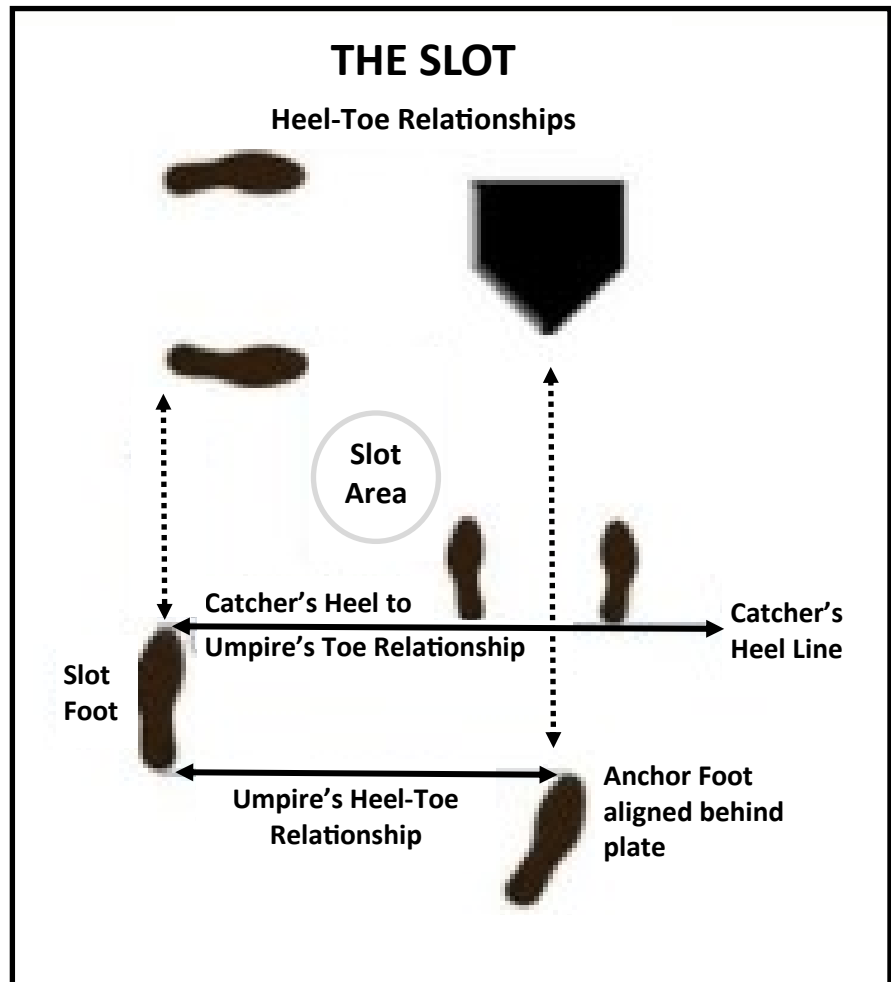
We've heard the adage "Get your head right." In softball umpiring, that means putting your head into a position where you can track the ball from the pitcher's hand to the catcher's glove and see the whole strike zone.

That means using the slot.

The slot is the area between the catcher and the batter. Your eyes should be beside but not in the strike zone and set no lower than the top of the strike zone. This position gives umpires the best view of the inside edge of the strike zone—where most pitchers like to work. It also gives you the best view of the top and bottom edges of the strike zone, as well as a consistent view of the outside edge of the strike zone.

Some of the miscues that have been observed of plate umpires:

- Positioning too far over the plate and in the strike zone. This takes away the accurate view of the inside pitch, particularly breaking pitches. It also increases the possibility that the catcher, in rising quickly to receive the pitch, blocks your view. Setting over the plate can create inconsistencies in calling pitches at the top and bottom edges of the strike zone.
- Setting too low, reaching your set position with your eyes below the top of the strike zone. This can create inconsistency with the high, top of the zone pitch.
- Setting up too deep—too far behind the catcher and



batter—which takes away your view of the total strike zone and increases the possibility of being blocked.

- Any head placement that puts your eyes in the strike zone. It is a natural reaction for our eyes to blink when an object, like a ball, is heading for them, and when we blink we can miss the pitch. If our eyes are not in the strike zone, pitches that cause us to blink are likely not in the strike zone.

All of these miscues can be corrected with the proper position-

ing that puts the umpire's head in the slot.

The best way of getting your head into the proper slot position is to start with your feet.

- Establish your position behind the plate by stepping behind the catcher with your foot opposite the batter (i.e. right-handed batter=step with your right foot). For most of us, that foot should be directly behind the point of the plate extended and about 10-to-12 inches from the catcher; those

Continued on page 16

Plate Mechanics cont. from page 15

with larger or smaller strides adjust accordingly.

- With your other foot, step toward the batter, establishing an angle in which the heel of the foot toward the batter aligns with the toe of the foot behind the catcher, parallel to the front edge of home plate. Establish a base between your feet wide enough to give you balance and bring your head between the batter and catcher.

Too close? Too far away?

You want to be close enough that your head will move into that position between the catcher and batter when you go to the set position while still giving the catcher room to perform her duties. A general rule of thumb for high school-age competition is for your catcher-side foot to be 10-to-12 inches behind the catcher and your batter-side foot to be in line with the catcher's feet. This should give the catcher freedom to move and react to the pitch yet your head, once in the set position, should be forward so that her movement does not block your view.

Your footprints should be an indicator of whether you are establishing a proper angle that puts your head into the slot—you should be able to see the toe-heel relationship of your feet. Your footprints for left-handed batters should mirror your footprints of your positioning for right-handed batters.

Dropping to the Set Position

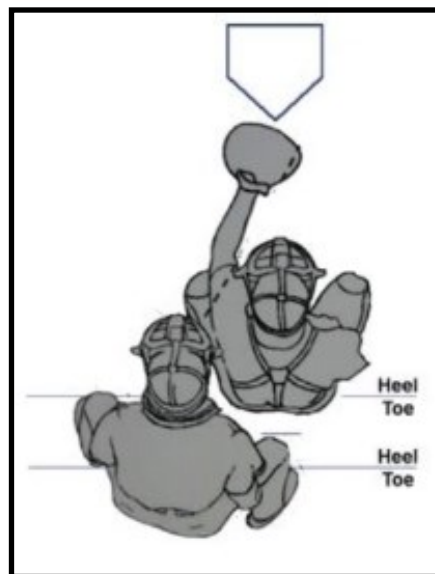
Once the pitcher starts her mo-

tion, the plate umpire should drop into the set position. If positioned properly, the set position should put your eyes beside and no lower than the top of the batter's strike zone. You want to be in the set position before the pitch is released so that you are stationary when tracking the ball from its release to the catcher's glove.

Any exaggerated movement while tracking the pitch can distort your perception of the pitch in relation to the strike zone. Tracking is more than just eye movement. It involves watching the ball from the pitcher's hand to the catcher's glove using a slight movement of the head guided by the nose. It is a movement of the nose which brings the head with the pitch as the eyes are locked on the ball. Follow the ball with your nose!

Timing

A reminder—track the pitch all the way into the catcher's glove and then judge whether it was a strike or ball. Upon making your judgement, give a verbal BALL or STRIKE while



still in the set position, then rise and give the strike signal if it was a strike. Timing is also important to your accuracy. If you rush your judgement and call you may miss the pitch!

Crowding the Slot

There are times when the batter "crowds" the plate in a manner that takes the slot away from you. When this happens, the best solution is to rise—go to set a little higher—so that you can see the pitch pass through the strike zone. It will be easier for you to adjust your strike zone for setting higher; moving your head into the strike zone can create more problems for you.

The Eyes Have It

Here is a helpful tip for plate umpires for achieving a consistent strike zone.

As you drop to the set position, glance at the bottom of the strike zone—the top of the batter's knees, and then bring your eyes back up to the top of the strike zone. Then focus on the pitcher and the release of the ball.

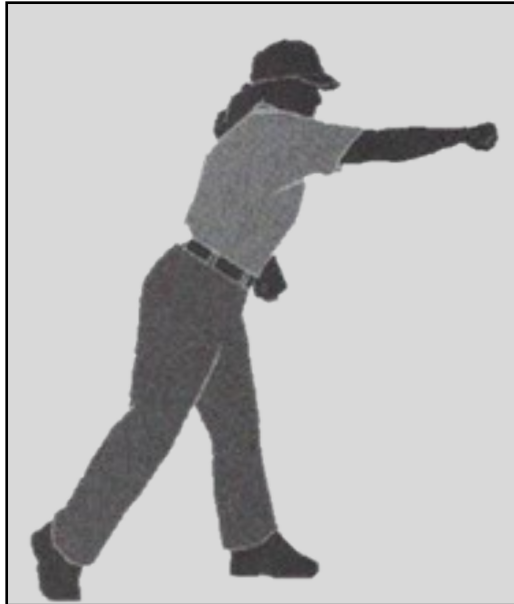
Doing this will give you a reminder of the bottom and top of the strike zone. This is especially helpful if you encounter a situation in which the catcher's positioning keeps you from taking your normal set position with your eyes positioned at the top of the strike zone. It also "opens" your eyes to their widest while watching the incoming pitch.

Umpire Standard Time

Don't Let the Game Tempo Increase Your Calling Tempo

Judgement, combined with rules knowledge, is critical to successfully making the proper call in umpiring. Yet there are two challenges that can adversely affect our judgement on the field. These apply to both base umpires and plate umpires.

- Rushing the call can be a major deterrent to proper judgement.
- Not seeing the whole play, sometimes related to rushing the call, can be another factor.



Rushing the call can be a problem created by an increase in tempo of the game. A series of plays—perhaps involving multiple calls on the same play—has the base umpire running all over the field while trying to cover each situation. This can raise the mental tempo of the umpire. An umpire working solo—having both plate and base responsibilities—can also easily fall into this trap.

How can umpires combat the tendency to rush the call in these situations?

Umpire Standard Time

As you position for the next play—the next at-bat—mentally turn your mental clock back to *Umpire Standard Time*. Use this as an opportunity to clear your thoughts of the game and the action that you just covered. Re-establish your tempo.

Pre-pitch planning can play an important role in this process. Pre-pitch planning—the process of preparing for the next play by assessing the game situation—directs your focus away from the plays or series of plays that just happened. It gives you a

chance to return to Umpire Standard Time.

Plate umpires need to be wary that pitchers who tend to pitch rapidly do not increase the tempo of the game—and the umpire's judgement—to create an advantage. While we like to keep our games moving, we can't allow a pitcher to dictate the tempo in a way to disadvantage the batter, or us.

Seeing the Whole Play

As mentioned, the problem of not seeing the whole play can

be a problem akin to rushing the call, but this situation can also occur on routine plays.

As an example, a batter bounces a ground ball in the infield and should be out at first by several steps. You, as the umpire, have done everything but record the anticipated putout on your indicator. But the fielder took a little longer than expected to make the play, or perhaps the batter had more speed than you expected. All of a sudden you have a bang-bang play at first base, but in your thinking, you have already judged her to be out.

Holding our call until the entire play is over will enhance our judgement and keep us from those embarrassing double calls. A clinician once instructed umpires to “give them a chance to screw up the play” before making your call. In other words, give the fielder a chance to drop the ball or the runner a chance to lose contact with the base.

Remember our keys to making our calls:

- Stop and Set
- See the WHOLE Play
- Make the Call
- Let the ball take you to the next play

Calling the Play Elements

Position—Angle, then Distance

- Force Plays—90 degrees to the throw
- Tag Plays—90 degrees to the approach of the runner

See all four elements:

- Ball
- Base
- Offensive Player
- Defensive Player

Stop and Set—be stationary to see the play

See the Play—watch the whole play

Make the Call—use proper signals

Lineups, Substitution and Penalty Reminders

Proper lineup card management and proper enforcement of the substitution rules is an important duty of the plate umpire. Below is a summary of the lineup and substitution rules that are contained in NFHS Rule 3, as well as a recap outlining the penalties that are applied in each situation.

Lineups

- Teams must have 9 players to start the game – NO EXCEPTIONS
- When using DP/Flex, lineup consists of 10 players but only 9 batters
- Roster Batting is prohibited—all levels
- Once the game has started, teams may drop to 8 players should a player leave the game for any reason and no sub is available.
- An out is charged each time the vacant position comes to bat.
- If a team drops below 8 players, the game cannot continue and is a forfeit.

Lineup Card requirements:

- First initial, last name, jersey number and defensive position of all starters, listed in the order in which they will bat.
- First initial, last name, jersey number of all substitutes (a player does not need to be present in order to be listed as a sub).

Continued on page 19

DP/Flex Quick Reference Chart

Managing the DP/Flex is a major challenge of lineup card management. The chart below presents a number of basic situations and resulting rulings that umpires may encounter. (NFHS 3-3-4)

ACTION	RESULT
DP/Flex must be included in starting lineup card submitted in pregame	DP/Flex cannot be implemented if not part of original starting lineup.
DP or Flex may be removed from lineup after lineups become "official"	Team goes from 10 to 9 players but may reinstitute DP/Flex during game. Player (DP or Flex) has been removed and may re-enter once.
DP plays defense for any of the other 8 batters	Player for whom DP is playing continues to bat and has not left the game. No effect to DP/Flex.
DP plays defense and Flex comes out of game	DP is playing defense for the Flex. Flex has left the game but may re-enter once. Flex may be reinstated by inserting an eligible sub into Flex position.
Flex bats or runs for DP	DP left the game but may re-enter once. DP may be reinstated by inserting an eligible sub into the DP position.
Flex bats or runs for one of the other 8 players in the lineup	Not allowed. Illegal sub penalty enforced.
Flex is withdrawn from game	Team continues with 9 players but may reinstitute the Flex by returning that player or an eligible substitute to the Flex position.
DP is withdrawn from the game	The Flex is inserted into the batting order in the DP's position. Team continues with 9 players but may reinstitute the DP by inserting that player or an eligible sub into that position in the batting order and returning the Flex player to defense only.

Lineups/Subs cont. from page 18

Lineup Card violations and penalties:

- Incorrect name, jersey number—make the correction (name supersedes jersey number). **PENALTY:** 1st offense=team warning; 2nd offense=head coach is restricted
- Substitute not listed on lineup card—add sub to lineup card and allow her to play. **PENALTY:** 1st offense=team warning; 2nd offense=head coach is restricted

Substitutes

- Substitutes may play even if not listed on the lineup card. **PENALTY:** 1st offense=team warning; 2nd offense=head coach is restricted
- Substitutes must be reported to the plate umpire. **PENALTY:** 1st offense=team warning; 2nd offense=head coach and substitute are restricted
- **Projected substitute:** The coach informs the umpire that No. 12 will bat for No. 7 but No. 7 will return to the game when the team goes on defense. The umpire accepts the No. 12 for No. 7 change. The second part is a projected substitute and is not accepted.
- **Re-entry:** Each starter may be removed from the game and returned to the game once, provided she returns to the same position in the batting order that that she originally occupied. Each substitute may be removed from the game and returned to the game once provided she returns to the same position in the batting order that she originally entered.
- **PENALTY:** If a starter or sub re-enters the game in a position in the lineup other than the position she originally occupied or after being removed a second time, she is an ILLEGAL SUBSTITUTE.
 - If she is discovered while batting or on base, she is called out and restricted to the bench. When discovered after completing her turn at bat and before the next pitch, the offensive play is negated
 - If discovered while she is on defense, the player is removed from the game and restricted; if she was involved in a play immediately prior to discovery, the offense is given the option of negating the play.

- **Defensive positions:** There is no requirement for coaches to report defensive position changes that do not involve substitution. However, changes to the pitcher and catcher positions should be reported and recorded so that the courtesy runner rule can be properly applied.
- **DP/Flex:** Any change involving the DP or Flex is considered a substitution and must be reported and recorded.
- **Pitchers** may be removed and returned to the pitching position once per inning, regardless of whether they are removed from the lineup. A pitcher returning to the pitching position in the same inning is not allowed any warmup pitches. The second time the pitcher is removed from the pitching position, she may not return that inning.
- **Courtesy Runners:** All courtesy runners must be reported.
- **PENALTY:** An unreported courtesy runner is an UNREPORTED SUBSTITUTE; the unreported substitute penalty (1st offense=team warning; 2nd offense=restriction of head coach and substitute) is applied and the substitute and re-entry rules are applied to this lineup change.

Summary of Lineup and Substitution Penalties

- **Lineup Card Error** (incorrect name or number, substitute not listed)
PENALTY: 1st offense=team warning; 2nd offense=head coach restricted
- **Unreported Substitute**
PENALTY: 1st offense=team warning; 2nd offense=head coach and player restricted
- **Illegal Substitute** (improper re-entry, no longer eligible to re-enter, illegal courtesy runner, Flex entering on offense for a player other than the DP)
PENALTY: Player removed from the game and restricted. If at bat or immediately after at-bat=player declared out and play negated. If on defense, preceding play negated if offender was involved.

A Word About Uniforms

There are no changes to the softball umpire uniform this year. The OHSAA has a new logo but the logo for officials' uniforms is NOT changing. We have made updates to our Handbook for Officials to reflect the change made in 2024 - the approved navy blue knit cap with the OHSAA logo may be worn in lieu of the navy cap for cold weather situations. We've also clarified that the plate umpire may wear a short or long sleeve shirt and the base umpire could wear a jacket or vice versa.

Charcoal Pants are the Future

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.

Some other reminders as to uniforms:

- Currently, pants are to be either Heather Gray or Charcoal Gray. All umpires for any regular or

postseason game are to be dressed alike. In the event that umpires do not agree to all wear charcoal gray pants then heather gray pants shall be worn.

- A navy shirt with the OHSAA embroidered or sublimated logo. It is not permissible to wear a long sleeve garment under a short sleeve shirt.
- A jacket shall be the red shoulder stripe model—Navy with red/white trim on the shoulder. The OHSAA logo shall be embroidered on the jacket.
- A navy cap with the OHSAA logo is required. The OHSAA **embroidered or sublimated** logo is the only logo permitted on shirts, jackets and hats.
- Undershirts or T-shirts are to be red.

Charcoal Grey Pants Are In Your Future

- Dark blue or gray ball bags for the Plate Umpire. If two ball bags are worn, they shall be the same color.
- Wrist watches and related items (i.e. fitness devices) shall not be worn.

Umpires must remember that appearance and “looking the part” are important. When we take the field we have only one opportunity to make a first impression. All umpires have an equal opportunity to dress well – your uniform should be neat, clean and of course in accordance with OHSAA standards. Let’s make the extra effort to look great. Shine the shoes, clean the hats, and take time to see what needs to be replaced this year.

2024 State Tournament Umpires

We congratulate the following umpires who were selected to umpire at the 2024 OHSAA State Championships. Roughly one third of our state tournament umpires were making their first appearance at this event and that is no doubt a result of many of these umpires attending our Mechanics Clinics and working hard to improve at their craft.

Mark Abbuhl	Galen Harris
Rick Annen	Ray Isla
Jeff Baker	William Jordan
Dan Barzak	Fran Lecon
Brian Beeksma	Kevin Lehman
Lou Bennett	Rob Luklan
Gene Bess	Paul Melcher
Michael Blazeovich	Jon Milesky
Eric Bond	Dave Miller
Terry Bowshier	Pat Montana
Jim Brumbaugh	Ryan Murphy
Mike Burwell	Harold Myers
Bill Combs	Aaron Noland
John Craig	Linda Papagna
Jason Craven	Dave Robenstine
Todderick Davis	John Schulz
Greg Drach	David Scott
John Fazio	Gabe Sierra
Pat Flanik	Brandon Smith
Andrew Guzowski	Larry Stewart
George Gulas	Ron Tatgenhorst
Ken Hall	Karly Tennant
Dale Handley	Jose Travis
Brian Harrell	Steve Trout

Bat Certification Marks

NFHS rules require that bats meet the USA Softball bat performance standards. Thus, bats that only bear approval marks from other softball organizations without one of the above certification marks do not meet the requirements for use in high school play. Note that USA Softball also publishes a listing of Non-Approved Bats with Certification Marks. This was created to provide a listing of bats that had once been approved for use but are no longer deemed approved for use. This listing can be found on the USA Softball website at this link - <https://usa.asasoftball.com/e/BB1P2000.asp>

Here is an excerpt from the 2020 NFHS Softball Points of Emphasis:

Bat manufacturers produce several models of bats for multiple organizations. These different models are often custom designed to meet the specific organizations' individual certification requirements. Bats that are custom designed for one organization may only bear that organization's certification mark. Conversely, a large number of these bats are designed to meet several organizations' requirements and will bear multiple organizations' certifications marks – making them legal to use in multiple codes. What is important to know is that NFHS softball recognizes and utilizes USA Softball's certification process. In order for a bat to be legal for use in NFHS softball it must be marked with the ASA 2000, 2004 or the USA Softball All-Games Certification Mark. Additionally, any bat with one of these certification marks must not appear on the list of the USA Softball Non-Approved Bats with Certification Marks. This list was created as a way to alert players and coaches that a bat that was once approved for use has now been deemed no longer approved for use. All bats that are approved by USA Softball, formally ASA, for use in fast pitch play shall bear one of the markings shown below. Once these bats have entered the market and possible issues arise, there is a process for revoking the approval of these bats. When it has been determined that a bat should have its approval revoked, either through the re-testing process or for a voluntary removal from the manufacturer, the bat is added to the Non-Approved Bats list with Certification Marks. These bats were approved when originally manufactured and were legal for play at that time, but due to some unforeseen issues no longer pass the approval requirements.



Equipment Inspection

High school rules no longer require the umpires to inspect equipment prior to every game. Umpires are expected to remain vigilant throughout the game and when illegal or altered equipment is identified the existing penalties, which remain unchanged, will need to be assessed. Certainly be prepared to answer a question from a coach about legality of equipment whether it's asked before or during a game. We remind both coaches and umpires that penalties prescribed in Rule 3-6-1 and in Rule 7-4-2 will need to be enforced should violations occur. While most equipment violations result in a team warning for the first offense and a bench restriction for the offender and coach on the next offense it's important to again note that the penalty for bringing an altered or non-approved bat into the batter's box includes ejection of both the batter and head coach. This ejection includes the additional penalties that come with any ejection of a student-athlete or coach.

Here is another excerpt from a previous NFHS Softball Point of Emphasis:

Continued on page 22

Bats continued from page 21

It is the head coach's responsibility to make certain all players are legally and properly equipped, which includes checking bats, helmets and catcher's gear prior to every contest. Equipment wears during use. Bats can become damaged, or a player may purchase a new bat that does not meet requirements. Catchers' helmets and batter's helmets have screws that hold face guards in place. These screws loosen and will eventually fall out rendering the equipment illegal and potentially causing a safety risk if not detected. Coaches must remain vigilant in inspecting equipment before every contest to ensure no damage has occurred or new noncompliant equipment has been purchased since their last inspection.

Concussion Regulations

Ohio law and OHSAA rules spell out our concussion regulations. Every three years all OHSAA officials must complete concussion training. Some reminders:

Review often the list of common symptoms of a concussion. This list is found in the Rule Book.

A player removed because of signs or symptoms of concussion may not return to play that day.

If you send a player out with signs or symptoms of a concussion, you must send a report to the OHSAA office. The report on the DragonFly platform is currently under development. We will notify umpires when it is available.

In the interim, officials who still can access myohsaa should use the concussion report there. If this is not available please send an email to aharding@ohsaa.org with the important details. (School, player, describe the situation simply, date, level of play/contest, and if a school personnel was contacted and how.)

Bats—Definitions and Penalties

Rules 1-5-1, 2-4,7-4-2

■ **An illegal bat** does not meet the specifications of Rule 1-5. **Altered bats** and **non-approved bats** are both types of illegal bats. There are other types of illegal bats – a bat without a sufficient safety grip or a bat that has pine tar on the barrel are just two examples.

■ **An altered bat** was once legal but has been structurally changed by rolling, shaving, warming, or some other intentional act. When an altered bat is used all penalties for an illegal bat apply PLUS the batter and head coach are also ejected from the game.

■ **A non-approved bat** is one that does not meet USA Softball specifications OR has been placed on USA Softball list of non approved bats with the USA Softball certification mark. When a non-approved bat is used all penalties for an illegal bat apply PLUS the batter and head coach are ejected from the game (same penalty as for an altered bat).

When a penalty includes ejection of the batter and head coach (altered or non-approved bat) the umpire is required to complete the online ejection report to inform the OHSAA and the school administration which is responsible for enforcing the additional penalties that apply when an ejection occurs.

■ **Illegal Bat Penalty:** A batter using an illegal bat may be discovered, either by the umpire or the opposing team, once she enters the batter's box and until a pitch to the next batter after she completes her turn at bat. The batter is declared out. If the ball was put into play, runners are returned to the base occupied at the time of pitch; however, runners who were put out on the play remain out. When the illegal bat is an altered or non-approved bat, the batter and the head coach are also ejected.

■ **Damaged bat**, a definition added in 2020, is defined as a bat that was once legal but is now broken, cracked, dented, rattles, or has sharp edges that could cut the ball. Note that a bat that has developed instability in the handle or taper (often called a wobble) is considered a damaged bat. Damaged bats are not considered illegal and when discovered are immediately removed from the game without penalty.

In 2022 a penalty was added to address when a damaged bat that was previously removed from the game is re-introduced into the contest. Under Rule 3-6-21 this penalty includes an out on the batter with all runners not put out on any play being returned to the original base as well as a bench restriction for both the batter and her coach.

SPORTING CONDUCT & EJECTIONS



We all know the importance of good sporting conduct. This applies not only to coaches and players but to umpires as well. Umpires are reminded to study Rule 3-6 and other rules relating to sporting conduct. Remember that potential penalties for unsporting conduct by a coach often include a bench restriction. When appropriate, we encourage that this option be used.

In recent years there have been some reports that celebrations have gone beyond what is acceptable and have been the cause of issues between participants. We certainly want to allow brief and spontaneous emotional reactions after a play. Beyond these reactions umpires should not permit prolonged, orchestrated, choreographed, self congratulatory, self glorifying, excessive, or demeaning actions that are not good for the game. It's impossible to write everything that should and should not be allowed. However, this listing of legal and specifically prohibited acts is intended to provide examples that will assist coaches in educating their teams and umpires in making decisions. Note that the penalty for illegal acts is covered in Rule 3-6-6.

Examples of Legal Acts

1. Celebration in the dugout or bench area.
2. Handshakes, high fives, chest bumps, and similar brief spontaneous celebrations with a teammate legally on the field.
3. Simulating a cross on the chest, pointing to the sky, or raising the hands or the ball into the air to celebrate a play.
4. Players spontaneously celebrating together after a home run or other outstanding play.

Examples of Illegal Acts

1. Use of profanity; insulting or vulgar language or gestures.
2. Taunting, baiting, deceitful or intimidating actions toward an opponent.
3. Words or actions designed to incite spectators.
4. An action which is intended or designed to embarrass, ridicule, or demean others under any circumstances including but not limited to race, religion, gender, or national origin.
5. Derogatory remarks directed at a game official.
6. Dancing, forward or back flips, orchestrated, choreographed, or extended celebrations.
7. Bowing at waist, making a hand salute, or striking a pose meant to incite or taunt opponents and/or spectators.
8. Hand gestures such as choking, throat slashing, or pointing a finger like a gun.

Ejections

When an ejection does occur, there are important steps that must be followed:

- A. Officials shall file a report with the OHSAA office whenever a coach or player is ejected from an athletic contest **within 48 hours of the ejection**.
 1. **Step 1: Speak with offender's principal/athletic director** – Whenever an ejection occurs, the ejecting

official shall speak with the offender's principal/athletic director no later than **the first school day** following the ejection.

2. **Step 2: Submit Report Form** – Officials will fill out the form electronically on their DragonFly account. Go to the DragonFly Hub tab on the left hand side of the screen; scroll down to the appropriate OHSAA Ejection Form (coach or player), select the form and complete in its entirety. Please complete one report for each person and for each offending school.

- B. The Officials Report Form may also be used to report good or poor sportsmanship, severe injuries, facility problems, or equipment problems.
- C. Ejections other than players or coaches and other items of which the Director should be made aware must be reported.
- D. The school AD and OHSAA will automatically be sent an email concerning the ejection.
- E. Response email notifications will be sent once the protocol has been completed.

An official failing to follow the ejection protocol and/or failing to file the Officials Report may result in a maximum fine of \$100 to the official per occurrence.

Ejected players must stay with the team. Ejected coaches or adult team personnel must leave the area of the contest, have no further communication with the team, and not perform any coaching functions. Such personnel may only return if summoned by an official in case of a situation such as a serious injury.

Ejected players and coaches are ineligible for the remainder of the day of the ejection and all contests at all levels until two games of the same level as the game of the ejection are played.

Post-game ejections are possible. Umpire jurisdiction does not end until all umpires have left the confines of the field. Inappropriate behavior on the field, after the game has ended may result in an ejection and will be handled no differently than an ejection during the game. Umpires are not to be harassed, threatened, followed, or menaced while coming to or leaving the field. The home team or game management is responsible for the security of the officials.

Game Ending/Suspended/Interrupted Games

With the typical weather issues we see each spring there seem to be many questions on this topic. There have been reports that officials have ignored severe weather conditions. Officials who do this will be fined and/or suspended.

Extra Innings

Most softball games are seven innings. When a game goes into extra innings the OHSAA has no tiebreaker procedure and the only rules change relates to charged conferences (see Rule 3-7-1). No runners are placed on bases.

5 Inning Games

Schools may agree to play a five inning game when multiple regular season games (such as a doubleheader) are scheduled for the same day. This agreement must be reached prior to the conclusion of the pregame conference.

Runs-Ahead Rule

The ten run rule applies after five innings in all games. In addition, any game will also end when both head coaches and the plate umpire mutually agree to shorten and terminate the game. A game will also end when it is forfeited under NFHS rule 4-3, however, in OHSAA play no game can be forfeited until after it has started. A game which can't be started for any reason is a "No Contest". All of these rules apply

equally to regular season and tournament games.

Tournament Games

When an OHSAA tournament game is interrupted or suspended for any reason the game shall be resumed at a later time and continued from the point of suspension/interruption unless both head coaches and the plate umpire mutually agree to shorten and terminate the game.

Suspended Games

The OHSAA does not permit games to be called and "started over" at a later date. When a regular season game is interrupted and the game can't be resumed that day, the game will be suspended if the team behind in the score has not completed its turn at bat in the fifth inning. If a regular season contest has gone beyond this point it is a complete game subject to two important exceptions. The first of these exceptions is a tie game. The OHSAA does not permit games to end in a tie and therefore all games are won, lost, or suspended. Tie games are suspended. Any game is also suspended when all of these conditions apply:

- it has gone at least five innings

Continued on page 25

Completed or Suspended Game?

When a game is halted by weather or other factors, the OHSAA has rules for determining whether that game is "official"—does not have to be completed—or suspended in which case it must be completed from the point of interruption at a later date. Here are examples of completed and suspended games:

The game is halted before the completion of 5 innings of play (4 ½ innings if Home team is ahead)

- **Suspended Game**

The game is halted in any inning with the score tied

- **Suspended Game**

The Visiting Team, trailing 6-4 entering the 6th inning, scores 3 runs to take a 7-6 lead but the game is halted before the Home Team completes its bat in the 6th inning

- **Suspended Game**

The Home Team takes a 6-4 lead in the bottom of the 5th inning; the game is halted while the Visiting Team is at bat in the 6th inning with no change in score

- **Completed Game**

The Home Team enters the 6th inning with a 6-4 lead; the Visiting Team scores 1 run to make it 6-5 and has the bases loaded when the game is halted

- **Completed Game**

The Visiting takes a 7-6 lead in the 6th inning; the home team scores 2 runs for an 8-7 lead and the game is halted

- **Completed Game**

Suspended/Interrupted

Games— cont. from page 24

- the visiting team has scored to tie the game or take the lead in the top half of an inning
- the home team does not re-take the lead in the bottom half of the inning and has not completed its turn at bat

When a suspended game is resumed, it shall be continued from the point of suspension with batting orders and lineups the same. Substitutions may be made. Suspended games that are not resumed are a “No Contest”. These games do not count in a team’s won/loss record.

Continuing a Suspended Game

Rule 3-1-3 states: **The team's lineup card shall include first initial and last name, jersey number, position and batting order of each starting player and shall include**

each eligible substitute. PENALTY: After the lineup card has been submitted to and verified by the umpire and a change is subsequently made to a player/substitute name or number, or if a player/substitute is added to the lineup card, the umpire shall issue a team warning to the head coach of the team involved. Any further changes made to a player/substitute name or number results in the head coach being restricted to the dugout/bench area for the remainder of the game.

In Ohio we have this exception to this rule:

EXCEPTION: If a game is suspended and resumed on another date the head coach may make any number of additions to the list of players and substitutes or uniform number changes to the lineup card provided such changes are reported to the umpire

immediately prior to the resumption of play on the new playing date.

Rationale: Due to weather conditions and darkness, suspended games with resumption of play on another date can be a common occurrence. This exception allows for lineup card numbering changes and player additions to be made in these situations without penalty. These changes and additions are often necessary for a variety of valid reasons – damaged uniforms, players moving from JV to varsity

Special thanks to George Gulas, of Medina, and Tom Hathaway, of Cincinnati for their continued commitment to our umpires through annual contributions to this White Book!

Some Words about Social Media

Umpires need to take great care not only in performing all their duties but in controlling what is said on Social Media and for that matter what is said verbally. It is inappropriate for any official, assigner, instructor, or local association executive to connect with a student via social media. This does not include athletes that are part of your family or officials that communicate to students as part of their job responsibilities (coaches, administrators, or teachers). It’s also not appropriate to pose for photos with student athletes – “here is our favorite umpire.” These examples, from past years, are designed to give us something to think about.

Well that was a first – team gives up 16 runs in the first, 3 more in the second, with three of those outs manufactured by me behind the plate.

I know many umpires have faced this dilemma. Yesterday I had a doubleheader and did the plate

the first game. Second pitch of the first game I realized the batter had an unapproved bat. Since OHSAA follows USA Softball bat rules the gold Easton ghost is not approved. I don’t know if what I did was right or wrong (I assume wrong since I did not enforce the rule). The penalty for this is an out, the ejection of the player, and the coach. I simply chose to play dumb and not start this day or year off like that. If the other team questioned it I would have enforced the rule. This player was not a factor and her team lost both games. Between games, I never told the other umpire because I didn’t want to influence him. If he saw it and enforced it, fine. In the past, I have told the coach after that half inning of the situation and they corrected it going forward. For whatever reason, yesterday I did not do that. You all need to be aware of what bats your players are using because the next umpire may not take the easy way out! And I probably should not have because eventually it will catch up to them and then I will be known as “the last umpire.”

Some Words on Playing Rules

We know that many of our umpires are working both OHSAA baseball and softball games on a regular basis. In many areas of the state this is very helpful as we work to insure all games are covered. Other umpires work softball games under other rules codes such as NCAA and USA Softball. This also provides valuable opportunities for umpires to get more work in each year. At the same time this can create some confusion about playing rules and the differences between sports and rules codes.

As a result it is essential to have rule books available and consult those publications when needed during the course of a game. Be prepared to check the books and explain the proper ruling to the coach. We continue to have a few unfortunate situations each year where rules are misapplied and not corrected. Some of the confusion seems to be caused by the factors mentioned above. Since the OHSAA does not recognize protests it is important that we refer to the books when needed and make corrections if necessary.

I know from experience that no one feels worse than the umpires when a rule is misapplied. We all need to get past the idea that checking a ruling is not something that should be done on the field. In this era of replay in professional and college sports it has become common to adjust a ruling – we don't have the luxury of replay but can at least take advantage of using the books when necessary.

HELP WANTED

We still need your help – please join us in our efforts to recruit new people as softball umpires. We'd like you to encourage others – your friends, neighbors, relatives, and co-workers to join you as an OHSAA umpire. For information on becoming an OHSAA official go to our website, www.ohsaa.org and click on the Officiating tab then select – “Become an Official” or use this link - <https://ohsaa.org/Officiating/permits>. Remember that officials working other OHSAA sports and non-school sports are great candidates to join our team!

We also want to encourage umpires to follow our advancement process and move to Class 1. Local Associations are strongly encouraged to help umpires through this process –this is a key responsibility of the association. Please work to insure umpires receive the required observations and are prepared for the advancement test. A Class 1 umpire is eligible to work both regular season varsity and tournament games therefore the testing is a little more challenging and includes some questions on the basics of three umpire mechanics.

Thunder and Lightning Policy

1. If thunder is heard, the game is stopped, the 30-minute clock kicks in-**NO EXCEPTIONS!**
2. If lightning is seen (but no thunder heard), the game will be stopped and the Game Administrator(s), Umpires, and Head Coaches will convene and determine what type of delay will be administered. **If there is lightning in the area, the 30-minute clock kicks in.**
3. At night (after dark) under certain atmospheric conditions, lightning flashes may be seen from distant storms. In these cases, it MAY be safe to continue. If no thunder can be heard and the flashes are low to the horizon, the storm may not pose a threat. Independently verified lightning detection information would help eliminate any uncertainty. **If any member of the group assessing conditions is uncertain, delay for 30 minutes!**
4. **Lightning detection devices may be used to stop the contest if lightning is in the area (usually 10 miles) even if it is not seen or thunder heard. Often, school medical personnel are monitoring this equipment – obtain their input as part of your discussions.**
5. **Err on the side of safety. If there is a delay, players, coaches and umpires must clear the field of play and seek cover. The host school is responsible to have an evacuation plan to get everyone to designated safer areas.**
6. The 30-minute clock is re-started each time that thunder is heard or there is lightning in the area.

Tips for Newer (and Veteran) Umpires

We are fortunate to have both some veteran and retired umpires who contribute their time to watching and working with new umpires, primarily at the sub-varsity level. Here are some ideas that may help both newer and even not so new umpires. Special thanks to Bruce Fisher (Westchester), George Gulas (Medina), Tom Hathaway (Cincinnati) and Eric Shroyer (DeGraff) for their contributions to this list. All are members of our Softball Umpire Improvement Team and are well known for the work they do. If you have time to work with new umpires let your local secretary, instructor or assigner know—they will appreciate it and so will the umpires.

- Contact your partner before the game. Confirm game details—site, time, and where you will park and meet. Park next to your partner and if possible away from others.
- Arrive on time (at least 30 minutes before the scheduled game start).
- Create a list of items to include in a pregame conference with your partner. Each pregame is different -a sample is on page 16 of the NFHS Softball Umpires Manual. Umpires should work as one crew as opposed to two individuals!
- Be prepared and know how you will communicate with your partner—especially when you need help on a pulled foot, swipe tag, or similar. Remember we always need a call before getting help of any kind.
- Know the rules. Suggestion #1—read the rule and then the corresponding case play section. Suggestion #2—highlight items of importance to you and use for future study. Suggestion #3—take the rules test to assess your rules knowledge. Look up the answers if you don't know them. Suggestion #4—Attend local meetings and remember that four is the minimum—you will learn more by exceeding that number.
- Study your mechanics—they are just as important as rules. Know your responsibilities for base coverages, fly ball tag ups, and touching bases. ALWAYS HUSTLE!
- Check your appearance—proper OHSA uniform, shoes, and equipment. FIRST IMPRESSION IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF WHAT WE DO!
- Pre-pitch Planning—prepare for the next play—WHAT WILL I DO IF?
- Make sure we always have “eyes on the ball and runners”. Know how you will transition from your calling position to your next Initial Position (IP) and be sure your partner has you covered as you lose eye contact with the ball and runners.
- Get the required distance and angle on plays – On tag plays 90 degrees to the path of the runner, at the leading edge of the base she is trying to reach, and 10-12 feet from the play. On force plays and plays at first base increase the distance to 18-21 feet from the play and if possible ninety degrees to the path of the throw. (See Manual page 32)
- STOP, SET, SEE THE PLAY AND THEN MAKE THE CALL! Remember the three keys to good judgment calls—POSITION, STATIONARY, AND TIMING!!!
- Be approachable—be prepared to answer questions and treat people the way you would like them to treat you.
- After the game, make an honest review of your performance. What did you do well? What problems did you have? What do you need to improve? This can be done with your partner or on your own. If you are fortunate enough to have someone observe you listen carefully to what they have to offer to you and use it to your advantage. Make a list of the things that you want to work on and review regularly to improve on these.
- Learn from veteran umpires—if you have a day off or rain out go to a game and observe the crew. Ask questions after the game. Ask your assigner who would be good to observe and where they are working. Veteran umpires are always willing to help!
- Your association's interpreters, instructors, and observers are there to help. Call or email them with questions. Perhaps you'll be able to find a mentor through these people—this person can work with you and watch you—a great help. It's also helpful to share your experiences with other newer umpires. This can help both of you and is another type of mentorship.

Doing these things will help you develop confidence in your rules knowledge, mechanics, and in your calls – this helps you to sell yourself.

OHIO HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

2025 SOFTBALL UMPIRE MECHANICS CLINICS

All sessions are from 9 AM to 4 PM

- **Saturday, February 8 – East/Southeast – New Concord – East Muskingum Middle School—13120 John Glenn School Road—across from John Glenn High School**
- **Saturday, February 15 – Northwest – Findlay – Glenwood Middle School—1715 North Main St.**
- **Saturday, February 22– Southwest – West Chester – Lakota West Freshman School—5050 Tylersville Rd.
*Park and enter on the west side of the school next to the softball and baseball fields***
- **Sunday, February 23 – Northeast – Berea – Midpark High School –165 E. Bagley Rd.
*Enter at side gym doors in back of school off Eastland Rd.***
- **Sunday, March 2 – Central - Reynoldsburg – Waggoner Rd. Junior High School – 360 South Waggoner Rd.**

The OHSAA will sponsor five Softball Mechanics Clinics in 2025. These clinics, designed to help umpires improve their skills and attain their advancement goals, will emphasize plate and base mechanics. Staff will be from the OHSAA Softball Umpire Instructional Team and will include OHSAA softball tournament observers. Umpires attending will receive one educational credit (local rules meeting).

◆ **Attendees will also receive SIX points added to their TOURNAMENT SELECTION SCORE.**

The cost of each clinic will be \$60 which includes all instruction, lunch, and a registration gift. Immediate registration is encouraged as the number of attendees at each location will be limited.

This clinic will be a working clinic – attendees should come prepared for both plate and base drills in an indoor setting. Please bring your plate equipment - OHSAA umpire uniform is recommended. Please also bring gym shoes as the weather will likely require that these be indoor events. Stations will be rotated in order that attendees can work with each instructor. We have learned that many of our newer umpires were as anxious as our veterans to take advantage of our Mechanics Clinics. These clinics provide a great supplement to the RefPreps classes offered to our newest umpires.

IN THIS YEAR’S CLINICS, GROUPS WILL BE DIVIDED BASED ON EXPERIENCE LEVEL – THIS IS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR BOTH NEWER AND VETERAN UMPIRES TO WORK ON IMPROVING THEIR MECHANICS IN A SETTING THAT HELPS THEM BASED ON THEIR AMOUNT OF EXPERIENCE.

Questions should be directed to Clinic Director Jerry Fick, OHSAA Director of Officials Development – Softball at jfick@ohsaa.org.

For Registration – Send form on the next page to: OHSAA – follow instructions on the form

Note – Clinic registration will start at 9 AM and program will begin at 9:30 AM. In case of inclement weather participants will be notified by email and the clinic will be rescheduled.

OHIO HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

2025 SOFTBALL UMPIRES MECHANICS CLINICS

REGISTRATION FORM

SELECT LOCATION:

- _____ Saturday, February 8 – East/Southeast – New Concord – East Muskingum Middle School—13120 John Glenn School Road—across street from John Glenn High School
- _____ Saturday, February 15 – Northwest – Findlay – Glenwood Middle School—1715 North Main St.
- _____ Saturday, February 22 – Southwest – West Chester – Lakota West Freshman School—5050 Tylersville Rd.
Park and enter on the west side of the school next to the softball and baseball fields
- _____ Sunday, February 23 – Northeast – Berea – Midpark High School—165 E. Bagley Rd.
Enter at side gym doors in back of school off Eastland Rd.
- _____ Sunday, March 2 – Central – Reynoldsburg – Waggoner Road Junior High—360 South Waggoner Road

Name: _____

OHSAA Permit # _____ EMAIL ADDRESS _____

Primary Phone _____ Years as an OHSAA Softball Umpire _____

**Attendees will also receive SIX points added to their
TOURNAMENT SELECTION SCORE.**

Payment of \$60 may be made via check or credit card. Checks must be made payable to OHSAA. If paying by credit card scan and email completed form to jfick@ohsaa.org or mail to OHSAA as indicated in next line. If paying by check mail to:

OHSAA, Attn: Accounting, 4080 Roselea Place, Columbus, OH 43214

CREDIT CARD INFORMATION

Full Name on Card

Card Number

Expiration Date
(MM/YY)

CVV Code (3-4
digits)

Billing Street Address

Billing City

Billing State

Billing Zip Code

Amount to be charged

\$

Product Description

Phone Number

Email Address

Remove this page to submit your Mechanics Clinic Registration

Remove this page and complete form on the other side to submit your Mechanics Clinic Registration

State & Local Meeting Attendance Requirements

As in the past, all softball umpires must complete four education credits and one state rules meeting. The OHSAA requires umpires holding permits in both baseball and softball to attend four local meetings for each sport – details are elsewhere in this publication.

The state meeting will be available both online and in person. The **BEST WAY** to start your preparation for the coming season is to attend a “face-to-face” State Rules Interpretation Meeting. There will be seven in-person meetings. **Each meeting will feature sessions of about two hours and in addition to the state meeting will review the most important items that we want to cover prior to the season. By attending the entire session, you will receive credit for a local meeting in addition to the state softball meeting.** There is no need to “pre-register” for any face-to-face State meetings. The schedule is listed below with all meetings starting at 6:00 p.m.

Monday, January 27 - Columbus—Franklin Heights High School—1001 Demorest Rd.

Wednesday, January 29— New Concord – John Glenn High School - 13120 John Glenn School Rd.

Thursday, February 6 – Cleveland – Berea-Midpark High School – 165 E. Bagley Rd.
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. - -
Cafeteria - Enter through cafeteria doors east end of building – Door #24

Thursday, February 13 – Findlay – Donnell Middle School – 301 Baldwin Ave.

Tuesday, February 18 – Piqua – Upper Valley Career Center – 8811 Career Dr.

Thursday, February 20 –Canton – Stark County Educational Service Center, 6057 Strip Ave NW

The online state meeting for softball will be available by the week of February 3. Details will be emailed to all officials and will include both login instructions and the deadlines for completing the meeting.

In-Person State Rules Meetings

Monday, January 27 - Columbus—Franklin Heights High School—
1001 Demorest Rd.

Wednesday, January 29— New Concord – John Glenn High
School - 13120 John Glenn School Rd.

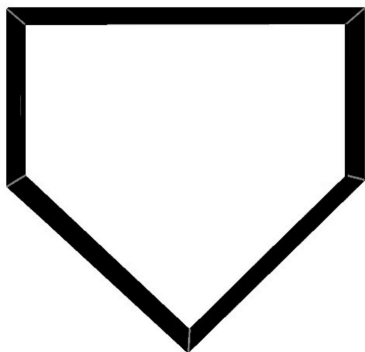
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OHSA Softball Umpire Mechanics Clinics

■ Saturday, February 8 – East/Southeast – New Concord —
East Muskingum Middle School—13120 John Glenn School Road

■ Saturday, February 15 – Northwest – Findlay — Glenwood
Middle School—1715 North Main St.

■ Saturday, February 22– Southwest — West Chester —
Lakota West Freshman School—5050 Tylersville Rd.

■ Sunday, February 23 — Northeast — Berea — Midpark
High School —165 E. Bagley Rd.

■ Sunday, March 2 – Central - Reynoldsburg — Waggoner Rd.
Junior High School — 360 South Waggoner Rd.