



Ohio High School Athletic Association

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Softball Bulletin 21-4

Director of Officials Development – Softball

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- **We're pleased to announce that we have secured a site for our pre-tournament clinic that will cover the three umpire system, as well as other topics. The date and location are -**

Sunday, May 16, 2021

WAGGONER ROAD JUNIOR HIGH

360 SOUTH WAGGONER RD

REYNOLDSBURG, OH 43068-9707

This free clinic is intended for umpires working the three umpire system in postseason play but is open to all OHSAA umpires. No preregistration is needed. Registration will be at noon with the clinic running from 12:30-4PM. Social Distancing and Face Coverings will be required.

- We have experienced a number of one-sided games. It is important that we continue to umpire in these just the same as we would in any game. Umpires should not be calling outs for violations which do not occur. We have seen this with the leaving-the-base-early call. Simply, if the runner is standing on the base and has not lost contact before the release of the pitch, we do not "make up an out" to get the game over. This damages our integrity. Sometimes, the coach of the team that is leading may have his runners leave early, and may even make you aware of this. Of course we are going to make the call in this situation. But in other situations, the coach may want to work with the players on techniques and these players may not otherwise get much playing time. Don't make up outs.
- The OHSAA is assigning COVID observers to some games. As we mentioned in previous correspondence there are some rules modifications that are not a responsibility of umpires. Without repeating all of these please note that these observers file reports to the OHSAA. In addition to the information on facilities and participants the observers will be reporting on the rules compliance by contest officials – masks and distancing at required times, no physical

contacting (handshakes, fist bumps), no sharing or handling of equipment, etc. Let's make sure that we have 100% compliance in every game whether there is an observer or not. We are having a season this year, much better than last year, and as umpires we want to do our part to comply with health regulations and keep it going. Of course, this means every game – not just when observers are present.

- Just as we had in 2019, there have been some more player/coach ejections due to the use of non-approved bats. Even though umpires don't conduct pregame equipment inspections any longer I think it's important to remember that we are to ask coaches in the pregame conference to certify that all equipment conforms to the rules. At least that way we don't have to feel guilty when we are required to enforce the rules. To review this, please take a look at the last bulletin and remember that bat and equipment issues are not appeal plays. When you see it, you must enforce the rule and make the call. These are important safety issues.
- Let's take a look at some of the plays submitted so far this season and see if we can all learn from the questions asked by our fellow umpires and some coaches.
 1. Play - We played a game and in the top of the seventh inning we scored two runs and we're down one with a runner on second with no outs. It started to rain, the umpire stopped the game and the two coaches and the umpires agreed to make it a suspended game. The coaches agreed to pick it up in two weeks when we played each other again. Then I got an email from the other coach [this morning](#) - it says hey the rules says it's not a suspended game and is an official game. I thought if the two coaches agreed to make it a suspended game that's what it was and the umpire called it a suspended game when he told my AD. Ruling- No, the way you describe it that is a complete game by rule. The coaches and umpires are not authorized to change the rule. Everyone should review the White Book and or the Coaches Manual for proper rulings on interrupted games. If the visitors had TIED THE SCORE OR TAKEN THE LEAD IN TOP OF THE SEVENTH this would become a suspended game.
 2. Play - I know we don't allow noise makers in the dugouts but I can't find anything about fans in the stands. Is there anything in the rules about fans not allowed to have artificial noise makers? Ruling - There is no OHSAA rule concerning noisemakers in the stands and if there were, of course, it would not be an umpire responsibility. A school may adopt rules prohibiting these and if so game management would enforce this.
 3. Play - In a recent varsity softball game, the batter entered the batter box and put her foot over the line approximately 3 inches from the side of home plate. I called time and told the batter her foot had to be inside the lines when the pitch is released. Each time at bat the batter did the same thing. I told the batter if she purposely wiped out the line, I would restrict her to the bench. The fourth time this happened the visiting coach complained that I had to penalize the player. I called time and talked to the home coach advising her that I would restrict the player to the bench. We finished the game without further incident. I have talked to many veteran umpires, and received many different answers. Ruling - Under Rule 7-3-1 the batter must have both feet entirely within the box. If she does not do so and be ready to hit within ten seconds a strike is called. Under Rule 3-6-17 if an offensive player intentionally removes a line on the field a strike is called and a team warning issued. For the second offense by that team a strike would be called and the offender and head coach are restricted to the dugout for the rest of the game.

4. Play - Runners on 1st & 2nd, 1 out. Batter hits infield fly near first base. As 1B is backing up to make a play on the ball, the runner from first runs into her causing Interference. Batter was ruled out on IF (out #2) then runner from first was called out for interference ending the inning. Ruling – Correct, this is a double play of a very unusual variety.
5. Play - R1 on first base with one out. B1 bunts a popup in the air in foul territory just down the third base line. R1 runs toward second on the bunt. F2 catches the popup and throws to F3 to attempt to double R1 off of first base. B1 is unaware that the ball is caught and continues to run toward first base. The throw from F2 to F3 at first base: a) hits B1 who is running outside of the running lane, or b) hits B1 who is running in the running lane. If the throw from F2 to F3 hits B1, is R2 called out for interference? If interference is called, would this be considered interference by a retired runner? Does the running lane protect B1 even if the ball is caught (even if she is unaware if the ball is caught)? Ruling – This is covered by Rule 8-6-16c. In your play the retired batter-runner is guilty of interference not because she continued running but because her presence in so doing interfered with the defense attempting to make a play on R1. The running lane is of no consequence and the runner closest to home is called out for the third out of the inning. This could be R1 unless there is another runner on in advance of R1.
6. Play - I have seen photos in the media of pitchers wearing the wristbands with the "play cards" on their belt. They do not appear to be distracting to the batter due to their small size, but are not being worn on the non-pitching arm as stated in Rule 3-2-c (exception). I would just like some clarification if the play card can be worn on the belt by the pitcher or by any offensive or defensive player. Ruling - Rule 3-2-7c Exception permits a wristband with playcard. The interpretation of this rule accepts the inference that a wristband must be worn on the wrist.
7. Play – Last week you wrote that bat sensor attachments are not legal. I had a game where a player told me the sensor was built into the bat and could not be removed. The bat had the proper USA Softball certification marks. Ruling – I had to do some checking on this one but found that there are bats with sensors made for the specific bat however ALL ARE DETACHABLE AND SOLD SEPARTELY. Continue to apply Rule 3-6-1.
8. Another one from a coach – how do we handle courtesy runners when roster batting? Ruling - First, NFHS rules don't permit "roster batting". You can only bat nine players. The courtesy runner rule is 8-9 and if there are no available substitutes there can be no courtesy runners. The pitcher and catcher would run for themselves.
9. Play – A player was wearing a very small nose ring which she said could be removed only by her doctor. Can this be taped? Ruling – No, under Rule 3-2-12 jewelry is not permitted. When discovered the penalty is found in Rule 3-6-1 --- remove the item, issue a team warning, and the next offender for equipment violations will be restricted to the bench along with the head coach. There is no exception for a large or small item and there is no exception for an item that requires medical removal. The limited exceptions are well documented and don't include either of what you asked about.
10. Play - Team A's pitcher was called for an illegal pitch. Team B had a player on first base and stole 2nd. The illegal pitch was called and we sent the runner back. After reading the rule book, should the coach be given the option of the result of the play? Ruling - There should be an option on this. See Rule 6-1-1 Penalty Exception 2 on Page 49. There is no option if the batter safely reaches 1B and all runners advance one base.
11. A good question from an Athletic Director – We have a problem with being short a couple uniforms in one size and we can no longer purchase the same outfits. We can get items that

are very similar. Ruling - Rule 3-2-1 requires that uniforms be of the same color and style. However it sounds like the uniforms you have may have some differences in trim which is perfectly acceptable and probably occurs quite often. Umpires should use good judgment in making this determination.

12. Another AD question - I have a girl who just joined our softball team and is requesting to wear a batter's helmet the entire game (while playing the outfield). My coach and I are concerned that this may not be allowed. Could you provide guidance on this issue? Ruling - NFHS rules are very lenient on headwear which is not even required. If worn, the item must be white, black, beige or a school color. The only items not to be worn are plastic visors, bandannas, and hair beads (3-2-5). Therefore, a batting helmet may be worn.

- Reminder - the Rules Test for 2021 has been delayed due to technical issues in our office. We will update everyone as soon as we know more.
- We still have two great local meetings coming out before the end of the season. The online local meetings give us the flexibility to continue meetings into the season. Watch for them as we have some excellent content including some great mechanics pointers. And speaking of mechanics issues we will try to address some of those in an upcoming bulletin.