



Ohio High School Athletic Association

Jerry Fick

Softball Bulletin

Director of Officials Development – Softball

April 14, 2020 Bulletin 20-3

[swdoc@fuse.net](mailto:swdoc@fuse.net)

- **First and foremost, I hope that all of you are staying safe and healthy during this trying time.** We continue to get many questions about the status of the softball season. There are still many uncertainties about the season for softball and other spring sports. The season has not been cancelled. At the present time schools are scheduled to re-open on May 4 and if that happens they can start practice on that date. Schools would be permitted to start regular season play on May 9 with tournament play starting around the end of May and the state finals being played on June 27. Although the regular season will be much shorter, schools can continue scheduling contests until the end of the season – if they wish they can actually go until July 4.
- **It's important to understand that this is the current situation and subject to change.** The OHSAA does have a plan for the 2020 season and I think we all hope that the situation will improve and allow schools to re-open on May 4. At the same time, we must all understand that without school it is obvious there can be no after school activities, games, coaching, use of facilities and in turn something for all of us to umpire. Please stay healthy and follow the guidelines mandated by the state. That is the best we way that we can contribute to an improved health situation for everyone.
- **State Meeting Extended** - Note - if you have not yet completed the OHSAA online state rules meeting the timeline has been extended and this will be available at no cost until Saturday, May 9. Please note that if you took the state meeting a couple of months ago it may not all still be fresh in your mind. As our potential start date of May 9 approaches, umpires are able to repeat the state meeting as part of their preparation for "opening day."
- **Let's all give our assigners a chance!** Many of you have questions concerning your assignments. We ask that you please give your assigners time to make adjustments to schedules as they receive them from schools. Most schools and conferences are trying to work through plans to create a new schedule that works in the shorter season. This takes a lot of time and discussion. I have heard of only a few schools that have finalized a new schedule and sent it to assigners. I can assure you that the assigners have their hands full and will communicate with you, probably through Arbiter, as quickly as possible. I know that they will appreciate your patience as they work through this time. If we are able to get going I'm sure that many schools will try to squeeze as many games as possible into the compressed season so be prepared to accept assignments and work when things get started. Note that our regulation was changed three years ago to permit doubleheaders to be played any day of the week. **You can help you**

**assigners by updating your Arbiter account to show your correct availability through at least the end of June. It takes just a few minutes to do this.**

- **Remembering Ernie** – Many of you, especially in Northeast Ohio but also around the state, had the opportunity to work with Ernie Johnson. Ernie passed away suddenly on Thursday after a very brief hospitalization. Ernie, a lifelong resident of Lake County, was an original member of our Softball Umpire Improvement Team. He continued to do everything he could to help all officials and had just been in contact with many of us on Tuesday talking about our hopes and plans for a start to the season. Ernie was a person who absolutely had nothing but friends – everyone he knew was his friend and he would do anything to help a friend or to help the OHSAA. He was involved in officiating four sports and started his OHSAA career 48 years ago. I know that his advice and efforts helped many of you advance in your officiating careers and as our Executive Director told me earlier today our state tournament won't be complete without Ernie and his incredible support. Ernie and his stopwatches were fixtures at every game of the tournament. Please take time to remember Ernie, his wife Kathleen, and his entire family.
- **Our pre-tournament clinic covering the three umpire system, as well as other topics, has been re-scheduled for Sunday, May 17.** We are in the process of finalizing a site. 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.
- **Remember the NFHS is offering its eleven sports officiating courses available for free** on the Learning Center at [www.NFHSLearn.com](http://www.NFHSLearn.com). The "Umpiring Softball" course covers obstruction, interference, and game management. A great way to cover these topics as we hope for and prepare for the start of the season.
- **The OHSAA Officials Hall of Fame Banquet scheduled for June 20 has been cancelled.** The Hall of Fame Committee will meet soon to come up with a plan recognize the Class of 2020 and other officiating award winners. In the meantime congratulations to all and especially to the new inductees with a connection to softball – Larry Black, Don Green, George Gulas, and John Vicarel.
- **NFHS Rule Book Corrections** –

Page 18 – Rule 2-4-3 Damaged Bat – A bat that was once legal but is broken, cracked, dented, rattles, or has sharp edges that might deface the **ball (not bat)**.

Page 50 – Diagram 6 – Rule 6-1 – The pivot foot is **in contact with and the pitcher's position is legal**.

- **NFHS Umpires Manual Corrections**

Page 23 – Item C-5-e – If the ball is near the foul line and lands in **foul (not fair)** territory untouched, give a dead ball signal and verbal call of "foul" or "foul ball."

Page 25 – Plate Mechanics – Fast Pitch – Illegal Pitches – **Delete all references to a base award on an illegal pitch.**

- **Thanks to those of you who send me the corrections you find in the publications – all are sent to the Rules Editor and I know she appreciates it as well.**
  - **Here are some plays submitted from this spring's meetings** – remember please send plays by email only so we can properly file them and have them in these bulletins. Please no texts or phone calls with plays.
1. Play - R1 on second base and B1 hits a line drive and R1 leaves on contact. F7 makes a spectacular diving catch but R1 is obstructed while advancing to third base. When she realizes the ball was caught she turns and goes back to second but is tagged out by F4. Can she be put out between the two bases where she was obstructed? Ruling - This play is covered by Rule 8-4-3b Exception 1. This runner may be put out, on appeal as you described, if the obstruction occurred while she was advancing but not if it occurred while she was returning. This exception is one of six in which a runner can be retired between the bases where she was obstructed.
  2. Play - Bases loaded, two outs. B4 hits an over the fence home run. R1 and R2 round third and legally touch the base. As R3 is rounding 3rd, the coach realizes that she missed third. He physically stops her and has her come back and touch the base. Is this a violation since we are in a dead ball situation? Ruling - Yes, this runner is out and this would be a timing play. Any runners scoring prior to the runner being assisted would score. This is covered by Rules 3-5-4 and 8-6-5. While these rules indicate that the ball would remain in play in your play the ball is already dead. These rules would still apply as the intent of the rule is to penalize this infraction when the offense gains an advantage.
  3. Play - Visitors bat top of 1<sup>st</sup>, the pitcher reaches base and has a courtesy runner. In the bottom of the 1st she is unable to pitch to her 1st batter and as required by Rule 8-9-2 the courtesy runner becomes her substitute retroactively. May the starting pitcher return to pitch if she re-enters the game? Ruling – Yes, she may re-enter and pitch - this is what Rule 8-9-2 Exception is referring to "All substitution rules apply and the pitcher/catcher has left the game." The corresponding rule would be 3-3-5. Of course this would not apply if concussion symptoms were involved.
  4. Play - Runner at 2nd. 2 outs. Visiting team batter hits a Fly ball to left field. Home team fans are leaning on the fence yelling "I got it" and "miss it". F7 drops the ball. Ruling - Spectator interference is covered in Rule 8-2-12 and occurs when a spectator reaches into the field of play and hinders a fielder trying to catch a ball. The play you describe is not a rules violation so the batter would not be out. This may not be good sporting behavior but remember that fans are fanatics and not subject to all the rules that actual participants are subject to.
  5. Play – There is a runner on third, batter walks. Batter runner is going to first completely in fair territory, catcher throws the ball and hits the batter runner, causing the ball to deflect and runner scores. Case book has a similar play (8-2-6C), but is different because it has bases loaded and the game winning run in the bottom of the seventh inning. Question is, is the BR out for interference or since there is no legitimate play, nothing. Ruling - In the situation you are talking about the B/R could continue on to 2B therefore the catcher could have reason to throw to first. In that case the B/R must meet the requirements of the rule and could be called for interference if she does not. Note that the three foot lane rule (8-2-6) applies to all batter-runners, not just those who have hit the ball or some other limitation.

6. Play - If the pitcher takes her position with her pivot foot in front of the pitching rubber with her heel against the rubber and then delivers the pitch. As she does, her heel comes off the ground and not in touch with the pitching rubber. Is this a legal pitch? Ruling - Under Rule 6-1-2c the pivot foot may either remain in contact with or push off the pitcher's plate and drag away from the pitcher's plate. The heel can come off the ground but the entire foot may not leave the ground.
7. Play - With runners on 1st and 2nd and 2 outs, the batter hits a HR. The runner on 2nd touches third and home, the runner on 1st touches second, third and home. The batter-runner touches 1st, misses 2nd, touches third and home. The defense appeals the batter-runner missing 2nd base and is called out. How many, if any, runs count? Ruling - Two runs would score here. There is no force play and this would be the same as if the batter-runner was put out sliding into second after both runners had crossed the plate (Rule 9-1-1).
8. Play - Batter approaches her turn at bat carrying an illegal bat. Before she enters the batter's box the defense elects to intentionally walk her. She takes her position at 1B without entering the batter's box. The illegal bat is called to the attention of the umpire. Can the umpire apply the illegal bat penalty? Ruling - Based on the wording of Rule 7-4-2 there is no infraction until the batter enters the batter's box with an illegal bat. Although there would be no penalty I would have the coach remove the item from the game. There is also no violation of Rule 3-6-1 because the illegal equipment was not used.
9. Play - I noted that a batter was using a non-approved bat. Should I have done anything about this or is this a play where we wait for the other team to call it to our attention? Ruling - This is not an appeal play - those are all listed in Rule 2-1. This is a violation of Rule 7-4-2. You should make this ruling upon your own discovery - The ball is immediately dead, the batter is out and all runners not otherwise put out on the play are returned to their original base. The batter and the head coach are ejected. Of course, if you did not observe the violation until informed by the defense you would make the same ruling.

This last question is a good one - remember that we must call what we see and not try to "take the easy way out." This applies to all equipment issues and the safety of everyone is so important - to the players, coaches, and to you as an umpire.