



Ohio High School Athletic Association

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Softball Bulletin 21-5

Director of Officials Development – Softball

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- **We're pleased to announce 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

1230 – 4PM

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. Social Distancing and Face Coverings will be required.

- I have received some reports and emails that umpires are receiving complaints about some of the 2021 Rules Modifications. These include the requirements that coaches wear face coverings and the procedure used when the pitcher goes to her mouth and then touches the ball. While these complaints are unfortunate I'd ask that you politely remind the coach that you are not making the rules. In fact, these rules are a condition established by the Ohio Department of Health in order that we can play softball and other sports. Let's all (I mean everyone including umpires) remember that this season is much better than what we had in 2020. Also, last week I was on a Zoom meeting with the NFHS and softball administrators from across the country. It's important to note that some states are not yet playing sports. It's also interesting to know that some states have relaxed some of their mandates but one large southeastern state that had done this reported that 8-10 schools had withdrawn from tournament play in the previous two days due to teams being required to quarantine. We need to remember our goal of "Let's Have A Season." Here's a quote from the most recent

update sent to OHSAA school administrators: “*As before, the key for our school administrators, coaches, participants and spectators is to use common sense when conducting or attending our spring sports contests or events in order to slow the contracting and/or spreading of COVID-19,*” said OHSAA Executive Director Doug Ute. “*We want our students to continue to be able to participate, especially those in spring sports who were unable to conduct their seasons a year ago. With some areas seeing an increase in the virus among teenagers, with the majority in that population not having been vaccinated, now is not the time to relax and let our guards down.*” We are over half way through the regular season. – let’s all continue to work together and politely remind each other of what we need to do and why we need to do it.

- From a coach: What is the rule when a fly ball hits the top of the fence? In one game, the ball hit the top of the fence and bounced back into the outfield and the umpire called it a home run. In another game, the ball hit the top of the fence and then bounced beyond the fence but my batter was given a double. Answer: There are a couple of rules that come into play here. Rule 2-28 defines a ball in flight as one that has not touched the ground, an object or person other than a player. A ball hitting the top of the fence is still in flight. Rule 8-4-3-f states that a fair batted ball that leaves the playing field without touching the ground or going through the fence is a home run. Case Book, 8.4.3 Situation S provides clarity: *B1 hits a long fly ball to center field. F8 goes back to the fence and leaps in an attempt to make a catch. The fly ball goes by F8, deflects off (a) the top of the fence and lands in the outfield; (b) the top of the fence, strikes the fielder's glove then ricochets over the fence in fair territory; (c) F8's outstretched glove and goes over the fence; or (d) the top of the fence and goes over in fair territory. RULING: In (a), the hit is alive, ground ball. In (b), a ground-rule double is ruled. When the ball ricocheted off the fence and then off the fielder's glove, it was no longer in flight and caused the hit to be ruled a double. In (c) and (d), it is a home run.*
- Last week we answered rules questions and promised a look this week at mechanics items – here is a list of items from observers and the email bag – we’ll call it OUT AND ABOUT OHIO:
 1. Communicate with your partner before the game, meet at the site and park smart. Contact your partner in advance. Park next to your partner and away from others. This allows you to have a good pregame conference. This is very important for tournament time when we may be working with new partners. In addition to park smart please depart smart – both umpires should leave both the field and parking lot together after conducting a postgame debrief which can only help us improve! Good communication is the key – before, during and after the game.
 2. We always need eyes on the ball and the runners. When a play is over and the pitcher has the ball in the circle we often need the base umpire to move to the next position. While doing this the partner must help and watch the players for potential plays including look back violations. When the base umpire gets into position then the plate umpire can release and return to the plate knowing the partner has everything covered.
 3. Plate umpires – get the mask off quickly when there is a potential play or you move away from the plate. It looks so much better if people perceive we can see the play.
 4. Plate umpires – don’t point to first base on ball four. Your signal may be misinterpreted and I have yet to see the batter-runner go to third base on a walk.

5. Signals – the signal for dead ball or time is both hands up. When we have wet fields and the ball must be switched out always kill the play before changing game balls.
6. Speaking of dead ball signals remember that is the first signal when we have interference. Use the delayed dead ball signal with the LEFT arm for obstruction. Please take the time to watch Local Meeting #6 which is coming soon – Paul Melcher and the Hub of Ohio Umpires have a great presentation on Obstruction/Interference.
7. Fair/Foul calls and signals – Also in Local Meeting # 6 – George Gulas will remind you of the mechanics, priorities, and signals – part of a discussion on making your mechanics better.
8. Record all substitutes – very important – this is why we keep lineup cards. Study the substitution rules and remember that everyone, both starters and subs can re-enter one time. Review Rule 2-57 to know what the difference is between an illegal substitute (player who can't legally enter or re-enter) and an unreported substitute. Know the penalties for each – Rule 3-4-1 and Rule 3-6-7. The penalty for an unreported substitute is much easier – team warning for the first offense and restriction of offender and head coach for subsequent offenses. Please remember to "announce" all substitutions to the opposing coach.
9. Base Umpires – Don't set up too deep in your initial positions. This applies both to times that the bases are empty and when there are runners. When the ball is hit to the outfield and we come inside we want to travel the minimum distance necessary, get 10-12 feet inside the base path and get turned around to find the ball quickly. If we don't find the ball we could be hit by a throw. At the same time pick up the runners for base touches and obstruction/interference.
10. Base Umpires – Unless the defense is playing a huge shift always take a position favoring the lead runner. If there is a runner on 3B shade to that side of the shortstop but certainly closer to the shortstop than the third baseman. If the lead runner is on 2B shade to that side of the shortstop. We have less time to move to cover a pickoff than we do to cover a steal!
11. Base Umpires – Don't hesitate to chase on trouble balls to the outfield but only when these are in your area. Your partner would rather cover all bases than have to make a guess on a diving catch. What is your area? With no runners on it is the centerfielder to the dead ball area in right field. With runners on it is the area between the two corner outfielders. Never chase/go out when the ball is hit outside of your coverage area.
12. Keys to Good Judgment Calls – Remember there are three keys to making good judgments and getting plays right. They are –
 - BE IN THE RIGHT POSITION. Make sure that you have an unobstructed view of the play. Work first for the best angle and then close the distance to the play. Don't get closer than 10 -12 feet on a tag play or 18 feet on a force type play.
 - Get stationary and set to call the play. One of our great umpire mentors from De Graff, Ohio, Eric Shroyer has said it to thousands of times – STOP, SET, SEE THE PLAY AND MAKE THE CALL. We can't see as well when we are moving and especially on the run.
 - Eric's words of wisdom also help us the third key – TIMING. Simply put - those of us who see the whole play and then make the decision will get more plays right than those who call the play before it is over. Put another way and in the words of Football DOD Bruce Maurer – Let your mind digest what your eyes have seen. Great advice!