

OHSAA

Ohio High School
Athletic Association



2023

Softball Coaches
Pre-Season Manual

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Coaches and Administrators,

Congratulations on your role as coach or administrator with oversight of the softball program at your school. This manual is designed as a quick reference for pertinent information regarding the sport of softball in the OHSAA. Due to the high volume of requests that come to our office, you are strongly encouraged to do three (3) things prior to sending an email or calling the OHSAA office:

1. Consult the subject areas in this manual.
2. Consult with your school's Athletic Administrator. He or she most likely knows the answer or has the resource to answer your questions.
3. Go to the Softball webpage at <https://www.ohsaa.org/sports/softball>. Various items are located on this site to assist you. In addition, I ask that you take note of the coach memos that will be sent out and posted to the main softball page.

This is a reminder that our State Rules Meetings remain mandatory for Varsity head coaches, which can be accessed on your myOHSAA profile. All other volunteer, assistant coaches, etc. are encouraged to view the rules meeting and become familiar with the rules. This is addressed in the early pages of this manual. All rules governing OHSAA Softball stem from the National Federation (NFHS) and the OHSAA. The NFHS Rules are specific to the playing rules while OHSAA Sports Regulations (and Bylaws) govern administrative rules specific to Ohio. No coach, administrator, or official has the authority to modify or set aside these rules.

Thank you for your professionalism, mentorship and service to the student-athletes at your schools. I wish you all



Kate Barnett
Sport Administrator

OHSAA Mission Statement

The Ohio High School Athletic Association's mission is to serve our member schools and enrich interscholastic opportunities for students

Important Dates and OHSAA Contact Information

February 8, 2023	State Rules meeting opens
February 20, 2023	First day of coaching / Practice may begin
March 25, 2023	First regular season contest Deadline to review the State Rules Meeting without a fee Non-interscholastic date
April 24, 2023	Final day for Completion of the State Rules meeting with late Fee (Teams cannot enter the OHSAA tournament if the meeting is not completed by this time)
April 30, 2023	Tournament Draw meeting
May 6– May 13, 2023	Sectional Tournament
May 15 – May 20, 2023	District Tournament
May 24 – May 27, 2023	Regional Tournament
June 1 – June 3, 2023	State Tournament
June 10, 2023	Season End

OHSAA Staff Contacts

Kate Barnett, OHSAA Sport Administrator, kbarnett@ohsaa.org

Administrates the sport of Softball and oversees the tournament, writes Softball Sports' Regulations, Softball Tournament Regulations

Jerry Fick, OHSAA Director of Officiating Development, swdoc@fuse.net

Responsible for overseeing Softball officials in Ohio. Serves as liaison with NFHS, oversees the education and recruitment of softball officials in Ohio and serves as the state rules interpreter.

Additional Softball Resources

- [OHSAA Softball Webpage](#)
- [NFHS Softball Webpage](#)
- [OHSAA Softball Sports Regulations](#)
- [OHSAA General Sports Regulations](#)
- [NFHS/USA Softball Approved Bat List](#)
- [Ohio HS Fastpitch Softball Coaches Association](#)

The Ohio High School Fast Pitch Softball Coaches Association

The purpose of the Ohio High School Fastpitch Softball Coaches Association is to unify all softball coaches in the state of Ohio, to promote high school softball, to create an official line of communication with the OHSAA to foster higher standards of professionalism and ethics, and to maintain a strong contact with national, state, and local coaches organizations of softball.

What the OHSFSCA does for You

1. Conducts the annual OHSFSCA convention and clinic.
2. Conducts annual board meetings.
3. Maintains the OHSFSCA website at www.ohsfscsca.org.
4. Conducts the state coaches' poll.
5. Selects all-state teams in each division.
6. Sponsors and conducts the annual all-state awards recognition banquet.
7. Sponsors the Delores Billhardt Award.
8. Maintains and selects the Hall of Fame and induction banquet.
9. Provides scholarships to graduating sons/daughters of member coaches.
10. Selects an annual academic all-Ohio team.
11. Honors coaches with service and victory awards.
12. Honors past presidents and selects and honors Hall of Fame members.
13. Serves as liaison to the OHSAA board of directors.

For more information about OHSFSCA District Meetings: <http://www.ohsfscsca.org/districts.html>

Rules Interpretation Meetings

The State Rules Interpretation Meeting is mandatory for coaches and umpires.

The ONLINE Rules Meeting link was activated February 8 at 9:00 a.m. The last day for completion of the online version for coaches and umpires is **March 25 at 11:59 p.m.** After that time, a \$50.00 late fee is charged for access to the meeting. The FINAL deadline with penalty, will be Monday, April 25 at 11:59 p.m. Failure to complete the meeting by this date will result in immediate withdrawal from the OHSAA Tournament.

For Coaches: The Rules meeting is available through the coach's individual myOHSAA account. If you do not already have your account, you will obtain your myOHSAA account in this way:

1. Your Athletic Director adds the staff member's name by using the "Add New Staff" button.
2. Your AD follows the prompts to add the:
 - a. New Staff Member's FIRST NAME
 - b. New Staff Member's LAST NAME
 - c. New Staff Member's EMAIL ADDRESS
 - d. Check box(es) to assign the appropriate roles/positions
 - e. Click the "INVITE NEW STAFF" button
3. The invited staff member (you) receives an email from info@myohsaa.org. Please check junk and spam folders for this email if you don't see it in your inbox.
4. Once the new staff member (you) opens the email,
 - a. Click the link inside and follow the prompts to either 'login' or 'create an account'

Once you login to your myOHSAA profile, click on the "Rules Meetings" tab and then Find a State Rules Meeting. Please do not use a Chromebook to watch the meeting as there have been issues with the meeting freezing. **When you access the Rules Meeting, make sure the email address linked to your myOHSAA account matches the email linked to the school's myOHSAA account. Failure to have the correct email address linked will result in no record of the Rules Meeting credit for your school.**

All screens of the presentation must be viewed for attendance credit to be provided. Once you have completed the meeting, attendance credit will be immediately recorded and you can check your myOHSAA account to confirm credit. Go to the Rules Meetings Tab and "My State Meeting Attendance" on the left-hand side. There will be a date and time stamp indicating completion of the meeting. If you do not see your attendance in your account after completing the meeting, please email me so I can make the proper adjustment.

**Please do NOT use a Google Chrome tablet—these devices will not record attendance.
You must use a desktop or laptop computer.**

Regular Season and Out-of-State Contests

The first date for regular season contests is **Saturday, March 25, 2023**.

- You may not play any regular season contest prior to March 25, 2023.
- If you scrimmage another opponent, it must be considered the same for both participating teams.
- Teams may not travel out of state just to practice.
- Teams may travel out of state to compete in scrimmages, previews and games in states OR provinces in Canada that border Ohio regardless of distance. The states are Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia and the province is Ontario in Canada.
- Teams may travel to a non-bordering state one time per season. Teams may practice while participating out of state. The Board requires documentation of this trip and the form can be found for your reference [here](#).
- In all contests competed outside Ohio, each school shall follow all Ohio eligibility standards, general and sport-specific regulations as well as the playing rules (NFHS or national governing body) as adopted by the host state association.
- **The penalty for schools that participate in a regular season contest before March 25, 2023 or travel to a non-bordering state more than one time per season shall be INELIGIBILITY FOR THE OHSAA TOURNAMENT.**

NFHS Sanctioning of Contests

Whether a contest/event is in Ohio or outside of Ohio, schools must secure a sanction through the National Federation of State High School Associations for competition by a member school in any of the following contests:

- a.) Any interstate tournament in which four or more schools participate ANY event which includes either an Ohio or an out-of-state school that is co-sponsored by or titled in the name of an organization outside the school community; b.) Events involving non-bordering states where five (5) or more states are involved;
- b.) Events involving non-bordering states if more than eight (8) schools are involved;
- c.) Events involving two (2) or more schools that includes a team from a foreign country, with the exception of Canada and Mexico. NOTE: In b.) and c.) above, no sanction is required if the contest(s) only involve Ohio schools and/or schools which border Ohio.

Schools desiring to participate in an event covered under the scenarios must visit <https://www.nfhs.org/Sanctioning/> in order to obtain the sanction.

End of Season Date

Relative to regular season contests, teams may schedule games up until the end of season, **June 10, 2023**. Teams who do not advance in the OHSAA tournament may still compete in contests up until this date pending teams have not exhausted the maximum permissible number of regular season contests at that time. This means that, even though you are in the OHSAA tournament or eliminated from the OHSAA tournament, you may still schedule (usually 'make up') a contest until this date. Keep in mind that playing this late also eliminates any opportunity for a player to play non-interscholastic softball until the school season is complete.

A Note on Scrimmages and Previews

Scrimmages are permitted at anytime during the season, including during the OHSAA tournament. Both teams competing in the scrimmage must count the contests as such. One team may not consider the contest a regular season contest and the other consider it a scrimmage. Teams may compete in a maximum of four (4) scrimmages or three (3) scrimmages and one (1) preview.

OHSAA Regulations Points of Emphasis

Bylaw 4-7-1 – Transfer

In the referendum vote which took place in May 2018, the member high school principals voted to change the transfer consequence, for those students who change high schools and do not meet a transfer exception, from the first half of the season to the second half of the season plus the OHSAA tournament. Once the first 50% of the maximum allowable regular season contests have been completed, the student becomes INELIGIBLE for the remainder of the regular season plus the OHSAA tournament. The current regulation in softball is that the student becomes ineligible at Game 15.

We urge your athletic administrator to direct any questions they might have about this transition and the application of the transfer consequence to a member of the compliance team: Kristin Ronai (kronai@ohsaa.org), Ronald Sayers (rsayers@ohsaa.org), or Alexis Holderman (aholderman@ohsaa.org).

Bylaw 4-1-3 Non-interscholastic participation (during the school season)

Members of an interscholastic softball team shall not participate in non-interscholastic programs (i.e. AAU, club, travel, church, recreational, etc. teams), anytime during the school season. This includes tryout opportunities, practices or matches.

Member of an interscholastic team is defined below per the OHSAA Bylaw 4-1-3.

4-1-3 A student is a member of an interscholastic squad when the student participates in an interscholastic contest. Such status as a squad member continues until the start of the next school season in that sport. An athletic contest involving participants from another school or any non-interscholastic or any organized adult team is a game, preview or a scrimmage.

Therefore, once a student-athlete participates with the school team in a scrimmage, preview or contest, he or she triggers member of a team status.

Colleges and universities may solicit opportunities for your student-athletes to train or practice with the college team, but these opportunities would be considered non-interscholastic events. Student-athletes who have triggered member of a team status shall not participate or he or she will become immediately ineligible for post season competition.

Inclement Weather

The NFHS has added a new note to the inclement weather policy which reads:

***NOTE:** At night, under certain atmospheric conditions, lightning flashes may be seen from distant storms. In these cases, it may be safe to continue an event. If no thunder can be heard and the flashes are low on the horizon, the storm may not pose a threat. Independently verified lightning detection information would help eliminate any uncertainty.

The thirty-minute rule remains in place. Any time you hear thunder, there is an automatic 30-minute wait. When lightning is seen, play would be suspended as normal, and the 30-minute count would begin. The note simply allows coaches and umpires to determine whether to continue play if there is no thunder and you can determine that the lightning is not a threat. This is only applicable at night.

- **Thirty-minute rule:** Competition or practice shall be suspended once lightning has been recognized or thunder is heard. It is required to wait at least 30 minutes after the last flash of lightning is witnessed or thunder is heard prior to resuming practice or competition. Given the average rates of thunderstorm travel, the storm should move 10-12 miles away from the area. This significantly reduces the risk of local lightning flashes.

Any subsequent lightning or thunder after the beginning of the 30-minute count shall reset the clock, and another count shall begin.

Sports Regulation 7.5 – Coaching Out of Season (10-Day Rule)

****The Board is still reviewing the application of this regulation. Further information will be posted spring 2023.**

General Sports Regulation should be reviewed since it pertains to out-of-season instruction, which is different than the regulations pertaining to General Sports Regulation 7.5.1. There are three regulations that have not changed:

1. The No-Contact Period for the sport of softball is August 1-August 31. Coaches are not permitted to coach his or her student-athletes during this time. Coaches may, however, oversee weight training during this time.
2. GSR 7.3 which outlines that six (6) student-athletes from the same school may participate on a non-school team.
3. Rotating of players on the non-school team is not permitted. Coaches may not substitute players from the same school on a non-school team. Non-school team rosters must be set and may only have a maximum of six (6) players from the same school on the team.

Sports Regulations 7.9, Individual Skill Instruction (Non-School Coaches During the Season)

This regulation addresses student-athletes receiving individual instruction **during the season** from individuals not associated with the school's softball program. These include (but not limited to) instruction from private hitting instructors and pitching instructors. Sports Regulation 8.2.3 reads:

“Non-school coaches or instructors may provide individual skill/coaching instruction to a member of a school team at any time provided the individual skill/coaching instruction does not violate any Board of Education (or similar governing body), school administrators’ or school coaches’ policies or the Ohio Revised Code.”

The language of this regulation provides the latitude to a school's administration OR coach that may NOT want to allow players to obtain “outside instruction” during the season. Within this regulation, you are given the authority to do so within your own athletic/team policies.

Sports Regulations 7.10 Individual Skill Instruction

This regulation permits school coaches the opportunity to provide individual skill instruction outside the season of play AND outside the June 1 – July 31 period. This opportunity is intended to allow school coaches to work with his or her student-athletes. This regulation limits the number of individuals (regardless of age or gender) to six who may be present for instruction. ALL coaches, whether paid OR volunteer, must follow the guidelines established within this regulation. It is built upon the assumption that ANY individual that works with individuals in a school has a Pupil Activity Coaching Permit and falls under these guidelines. Special attention should be given to the Ohio Ethics Law as it relates to school individuals using school facilities outside the normal work environment. (See your school administration on the Ohio Ethics Law and how it relates to you as a coach). **During such instruction, the coach and their individual groups may be in the same facility; however, the groups must be clearly defined and shall not combine for instruction at any time or participate in “team play.”** Please refer to General Sports Regulation 7.8.3 for the definition of “team play.” **It is permissible to have groups rotate to different coaches for specific skill instruction being delivered by that coach, however, the students in each group must remain the same.**

The intent of this regulation was not designed to provide more team coaching opportunities out of season and in no way designed to be a team workout regulation outside the season. It is available for our school coaches to give individual skill (hitting instruction, fielding instruction, or pitching instruction, etc.) outside the season.

Supervision

Softball coaches are permitted to supervise weightlifting during the No-Contact periods.

Maximum number of contests

No school team may participate in more than twenty-seven (27) regular season contests. Double headers are permitted but each contest would count toward the maximum number of permissible contests.

Per our Softball Sport Regulations, individuals are permitted to compete in a maximum of thirty-two (32) dates of competition. This rule allows for student-athletes to compete on both JV and Varsity teams throughout the season. Doubleheaders count as one (1) date of competition for an individual. Individuals are not permitted to compete in more than two (2) contests in a day with the one-day exception permitted in softball for a tripleheader.

Coaches must keep track of dates of competition for individuals. Any player that exceeds thirty-two (32) dates of competition will become immediately ineligible. Further, if an ineligible player participates in a contest, the contest will be forfeited. In the event contest limitations are questioned, coaches and administrators must provide written documentation (scorebook pages for example) to prove compliance.

More on OHSAA Regulations

General Sports Regulations

General sport regulations provide guidance on non-sport specific regulations such as open gym regulations, no contact periods, non-interscholastic participation, player and coach ejection policies, etc. The sport regulations can be found on our website [here](#).

This manual is designed to highlight just a few pertinent regulations that pose a lot of questions throughout the year.

Open Gyms/Facilities/Fields at Member Schools

Open gyms (or facilities) are clearly defined in GSR 10, but a brief overview is provided below.

- A school may open its athletic facilities for unstructured free play provided the activity is supervised by a school employee who may remove participants or spectators for disciplinary reasons.
- The school may designate the sport or sports that will be played during the free play period, but may not limit participation to a select group of students from within the school. Participation may be limited to students enrolled in that specific school.
- There can be no designation of who will play on which team or who will play whom. Only those students participating may be involved in the selection of teams.
- Regulation timing of games is not permitted.
- Written scorekeeping is not permitted.
- No individual invitations, written or oral, are permitted to any student who is not enrolled and in that school district.
- A coach, paid or volunteer, violates the provision of these regulations when the coach requires, suggests or in any way implies that a student's chance to be selected for an interscholastic squad is contingent upon participation at an open gymnasium or facilities program.
- Mandatory attendance at open gyms/facilities is not permitted.
- Transporting athletes to a school or non-school open gym/facility is a violation for any member of the coaching staff, paid or volunteer.

- Coaches may participate in the unstructured free play in the open gym/facilities.
- Schools may restrict individuals from observing the open gym/facility activity.

Softball Specific Regulations

Sport specific regulations provide guidance specific to the sport of softball. The sport regulations can be found on our website [here](#).

This manual is designed to highlight just a few pertinent regulations that pose a lot of questions throughout the year.

Non-Interscholastic Competition

Once a student-athlete triggers member of a team status (by competing in a contest, scrimmage or preview), she may not participate with a non-interscholastic team which includes tryouts, practice and contests.

A member of an interscholastic softball team sponsored by the Board of Education may participate in non-interscholastic softball (such as 'club' or 'travel') PRIOR TO and AFTER the school season under the following conditions:

- Teams formed for FALL softball leagues may not have more than six (6) from any one school on the same team.
- The six (6) person from the same team limit is not in effect for the sports of baseball, lacrosse and softball as soon as a team member has completed his/her school team's season through July 31.
- Graduating seniors are exempt from this four-player limitation with regard to non-interscholastic participation.

Comments to News Media

Each year unpleasant situations arise as a result of comments made to the news media by coaches. The OHSAA Constitution and Bylaws reads in part "Great care shall be exercised in the selection of officials, well in advance of the contest and agreed upon by schools involved." Public criticism of officials is a direct reflection upon those who were responsible for assigning the officials to the match. Officials are trained and expected to make no derogatory comments regarding the players, coaches, or schools. Coaches are expected to follow the same procedure in regard to the officials. Coaches violating this rule may be asked to discuss the problem personally with the Executive Director. (See Sports Regulations "Media Regulations")

Videotaping Regulations

Regular Season Contests

It is permissible for a school or a school representative to videotape or photograph regular season contests (including previews and scrimmages) of the team or individuals from one's own school. Such videotapes or photographs may be used for "in-game" coaching purposes only if it is specified in the national playing rules of the sport or in the specific sport regulations.

It is permissible for a school or a school representative to videotape or photograph regular season contests (including previews, scrimmages and/or practices) of teams or individuals not from one's own school only with the written consent of all schools participating in the contest(s).

OHSAA Tournament Contests Videotaping and Photographing by Participating Schools

- Videotaping OHSAA tournament contests of the team or individuals from one's own school participating in the contest is permitted provided prior arrangements are made with the tournament manager, and it is done at the expense of the school involved. A maximum of two individuals per school are permitted to videotape.
- All photographs and videos taken by school representatives of the team or individuals from one's own school at OHSAA tournament contests are for school use ONLY. The use of photographs or videos taken by school representatives for commercial purposes is prohibited. Such videotapes or photographs may be used for "in-game" coaching purposes only if it is specified in the national playing rules of the sport or in the specific sport regulations.
- It is permissible for a school or a school representative to videotape or photograph tournament contests (including practices) of teams or individuals not from one's own school only with the written consent of all schools participating in the contest(s).
- It is permissible for a school or school representative to *utilize* video and photographs of tournament contests (including practices) of teams or individuals not from one's own school only with the written consent of all schools participating in the contest(s).

Doubleheaders/Tripleheaders

There are no restrictions on playing doubleheaders on school nights. Doubleheaders are dependent on local school district/athletic department policy. Once per year, softball teams are permitted to play three contests in one day provided it is on a non-school day.

Umpires

Umpires used for varsity contests must be OHSAA Class 1 umpires (a Class 2 umpire may be used in emergency situations with approval from the OHSAA Officiating Department). Class 1 or Class 2 must be used for JV contests. Class 1, 2, 3 or an umpire in training must be used for freshman contests. If only one OHSAA umpire is present, the contest may be played if opposing coaches mutually agree.

Per OHSAA Bylaw 8-3-1-, all decisions made by officials shall be final without appeal.

Indoor Softball

There is no limit on the number of players from the same school team competing together in indoor softball from November 1-February 1. Coaches are permitted to coach his or her own players on an indoor softball team during this time period.

Regulations on Bats

Below is detailed information on bat regulations, definitions and penalties. All NFHS rules governing bats are found in Section 5 of Rule 1.

Bats Sensors

- Attachment used to measure swing speed
- **NOT legal for play under NFHS rules**
- Can be used in practice
- Update from NFHS on penalty for use
- Play - B1 enters the batter's box with a legal bat which has had a bat sensor added to measure swing speed. The umpire sees this or the defense notes this and calls this to the attention of the umpire.
- When discovered the item must be removed from the game or be made legal - sensor can be removed or the bat can not be used.
- The umpire will issue a team warning, and the next violation of Rule 3-6-1 (equipment) by that team will result in the offender and the head coach being restricted to the dugout/bench for the remainder of the game
- In addition, since the batter entered the batter's box with the illegal bat, Rule 7-4-2 would also apply and the batter would be ruled out with runners returning if they advanced on that play.

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. A batter who enters the box with an illegal bat or is discovered having used an illegal bat with the infraction being detected by the umpire or the defense prior to the next pitch is out. The ball is immediately dead, and all runners return to the base occupied at the time of the pitch. If a runner was retired on the play, the out stands and the runner does not return.
- 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 (formerly ASA) 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 also ejected from the game (same penalty as for an altered bat).
- Beginning in 2020, a new definition has been added for a damaged bat. This item 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. EFFECTIVE IN 2022 – Rule 3-6-21 adds a penalty for a batter using a damaged bat previously removed from that game by an umpire. If this occurs, the batter is out and both the offender and head coach are restricted to the dugout for the remainder of the game.
- It is important to know what Certification Marks are required for NFHS softball competition. Rule 1-5-1d and Figure 1-6 have now been updated to include USA Softball's newest certification mark shown which are also provided below – there are now three marks which are the only approved marks for bats used in high school play:



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>.

Pre-Season Parent/Plaver Meetings

Pre-season meetings with parents are mandatory and will most likely occur along with other spring sport teams. This is determined by each school’s athletic administrator. This is the time to cover such things as eligibility requirements, individual school policies, individual sport polices, sporting behavior issues and expectations, travel plans for away contests, etc.

Also, a course titled “The Role of the Parent in Sports” has recently been offered by the NFHS and is FREE to parents. Encourage them to watch this very informative video course. Coaches are encouraged to share new rule changes with parents. Many times parents become argumentative or lash out due to know being knowledgeable about the rules.

NFHS courses are available through the www.nfhslearn.com website. For softball specific rules, you can direct parents to the NFHS website where additional information is provided at the bottom of the page [here](#).

travel plans for away contests, etc. I encourage coaches to use this time to their advantage and provide as much education as possible to parents. To access some sample meeting template information’s check out the OHSAA webpage [here](#).

Coaches’ Toolchest

The OHSAA has partnered with Coaches’ Toolchest as a one stop shop for coaches to obtain certifications. The program helps ensure that coaches have the knowledge they need to best serve their student athletes and to position those athletes for success in sport, and in life. For administrators, it provides an efficient, simple method of ensuring all of the school coaches are compliant with their PAP requirements. More than just meeting the legally mandated minimum requirements the program adds in a professional development piece as well. For more information, please check out the link [HERE](#).



Pupil Activity Permits & Concussion Legislation

As outlined in Ohio Administrative Code, all Coaches of Middle School/Jr. High and High School teams **MUST** possess a “Pupil Activity Validation Certificate” to coach in Ohio. This includes paid coaches AND volunteer coaches. School administrators are responsible for maintaining records on compliance and most schools provide opportunities for their coaches to obtain the necessary coursework. The actual regulations AND the certificate can be downloaded from the OHSAA’s Sports’ Medicine page or directly at: <http://www.ohsaa.org/medicine> . To obtain the required certificate through the ODE, one must:



- **Have completed a Sports’ First Aid Course**
- **Possess a valid CPR Card**
- **Have been approved by their local Board of Education or similar governing body**
- **Complete the NFHS Fundamentals of Coaching course**
- **Complete one of two approved Concussion Recognition courses**
- **Complete the Sudden Cardiac Arrest video course offered by the Ohio Dept. of Health**

For more information regarding the requirements, click [here](#).

Concussion Legislation as it relates to Coaching Requirements

Though the entire law is explained later, all coaches today MUST complete one of two (2) approved Concussion Education programs online upon renewal of their Pupil Activity Permit anytime **after April 26, 2013**. Individual student-athletes removed from contests with a suspected concussion are no longer permitted to return to play on the same day of the contest – regardless of the diagnoses. If they are removed by one of the individuals given this authority, they simply cannot return to play the same day. Written authorization IS required to return anytime thereafter and must be kept on file with the school Athletic Administrator.

Lindsay’s Law- Sudden Cardiac Arrest

ODE Website: <http://www.odh.ohio.gov/landing/Lindsays-Law.aspx>

Lindsay’s Law, Ohio Revised Code [3313.5310](#), [3707.58](#) and [3707.59](#) became effective on August 1, 2017. In accordance with this law, the Ohio Department of Health, the Ohio Department of Education, the Ohio High School Athletic Association, the Ohio Chapter of the American College of Cardiology and other stakeholders jointly developed guidelines and other relevant materials to inform and educate students and youth athletes participating in or desiring to participate in an athletic activity, their parents, and their coaches about the nature and warning signs of sudden cardiac arrest. The following resources were developed to implement Lindsay’s Law:

For parents/guardians and student- athletes in grades 7-12 in Ohio schools

- [Required video](#)
- [Required SCA Informational Handout](#)
- [Required Signature Form](#)

For coaches:

If you are a coach for an interscholastic sport and are licensed by the Ohio Department of Education (all paid and volunteer coaches in Ohio), please visit their website for information about their training requirements around Lindsay’s Law <http://www.odh.ohio.gov/landing/Lindsays-Law.aspx>. The required video, informational handout and a post assessment test will be available shortly through the ODE’s website. We will inform you when that component is available. If, however, you want to have your coaches view the video and review the information immediately, you may access those items below. Please be advised that as a school district, your superintendent must be able to verify that

coaches have seen this video and read the informational handout if you choose to implement this requirement before it is available through ODE's LMS.

- [Required video](#)
- [Required SCA Informational Handout](#)

Communication to Coaches

The OHSAA will continue to send information to member school superintendents, principals, and athletic administrators electronically with timely updates and reminders on a variety of topics through Softball Coach Memos and the OHSAA Administrator Update. These bulletins are also posted on the OHSAA website.

Coaches Code of Ethics

From the NFHS Softball Rules Book

The function of a coach is to educate students through participation in interscholastic competition. An interscholastic program should be designed to enhance academic achievement and should never interfere with opportunities for academic success. Each student should be treated with the utmost respect and his or her welfare should be considered in decisions by the coach at all times. Accordingly, the following guidelines for coaches have been adopted by the NFHS Board of Directors.

The Coach shall be aware that he or she has a tremendous influence, for either good or ill, on the education of the student and, thus, shall never place the value of winning above the value of instilling the highest ideals of character.

The Coach shall uphold the honor and dignity of the profession. IN all personal contact with students, officials, athletic directors, school administrators, the state high school athletic association, the media and the public, the coach shall strive to set an example of the highest ethical and moral conduct.

The Coach shall take an active role in the prevention of drug, alcohol, and tobacco abuse.

The Coach shall promote the entire interscholastic program of the school and direct the program in harmony with the total school program.

The Coach shall master the contest rules and shall teach them to his or her team members. The coach shall not seek an advantage by circumvention of the spirit or letter of the rules.

The Coach shall exert his or her influence to enhance sportsmanship by spectators, both directly and by working closely with cheerleaders, pep club sponsors, booster clubs, and administrators.

The Coach shall respect and support contest officials. The coach shall not indulge in conduct which would incite players or spectators against the officials. Public criticism of officials or players is unethical.

The Coach should meet and exchange cordial greetings with the opposing coach to set the correct tone for the event before and after the contest.

The Coach shall not exert pressure on faculty members to give students special consideration.

The Coach shall not scout opponents by any means other than those adopted by the league and/or state high school athletic association.

Professionalism

Your professionalism is of the utmost importance. Your athletes and fans will follow your lead. If you are respectful of the game and the officials, your athletes and fans are more likely to do the same. If you are disrespectful of the game and the officials, it will be reflected in the words and actions of your athletes and fans. Officials aren't perfect and mistakes will be made, but it is all part of the learning process for our young student-athletes. So please take those disappointments and turn them into positive learning experiences. What you permit, you promote.

Officials Code of Ethics

(From the OHSAA Handbook for Officials)

Our member schools have entrusted officials to assist them in the education and development of their youth through athletics. This requires officials to be independent, impartial, and responsible to the people they serve. In recognition of these expectations there is an established **Code of Ethics** and **Code of Conduct** 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 credible 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 points or rules at issue.

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 avocation in all personal conduct and relations with the 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 accordingly to expectations and maintain a proper appearance that is befitting the importance of the game.

An Official shall avoid the use of **tobacco and related products** at the contest site.

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.

Sports officials bear great responsibility for engendering public confidence in sports. They are critical to the health of athletic competitions. Officials ensure games are played fairly, by the rules, within the spirit of the rules and in a safe manner. Officiating takes a great deal of preparation, continuing education and commitment of time.

2023 Rules Information

The following national playing rule updates were to go into effect in the 2023 season.

Rules Changes

1-4-1: Removes the number of color restrictions on a glove, including laces and seams, and does not allow any part of the glove to match the color of the ball.

Rationale: Gloves and mitts are manufactured in variety of designs and multiple colors. As long as the color of the ball is not one of the colors used, does not have markings that give the appearance of the ball or are made in a manner that is judged distracting by the umpire it is permitted for use in NFHS Softball.

2-20-1g: A fair ball is a batted ball that while over fair territory, an offensive player interferes with a defensive player attempting to field a batted ball.

Rationale: The ball's status is determined at the point of interference. If an offensive player interferes with the defensive player while the ball is in fair territory, the ball is dead. Adding this language to the definition section mirrors the foul ball definition in Rule 2-25-1e.

3-2-12, 3-6-11: Removes language prohibiting the wearing of jewelry.

Rationale: Removing the language prohibiting jewelry places the softball rules in line with other NFHS sports that have removed the restriction. Umpires still have the authority to rule on anything that is considered a distraction or increases risk to any player.

4-2-1: Defines the protocol for when a fair batted ball clears the home run fence to end the game. All runs are allowed to score before the game is terminated.

Rationale: Allows for all runs to be counted when a fair batted ball clears the home run fence to end the game. All runs scored by virtue of the home run will be included in individual and team statistics.

8-2-7: New language clarifies batter-runner interference on a fly ball over foul territory.

Rationale: This has always been the enforcement but was not listed in the section covering batter-runner. The language is consistent with the rule covering interference on an initial play on a fair-batted ball and aligns with Rule 8-6-10.

Editorial Changes

2-25-1e, 7-1-2 PENALTY 1, 7-4-1, 7-4-11, 8-1-1 EFFECTS 2, 8-4-3d

Points of Emphasis

1. Sportsmanship
2. Time Between Innings
3. Jewelry and Electronic Communication
4. Comparable Drying Agents

SPORTSMANSHIP

Good sporting behavior is one of the fundamental ingredients to the continued success and enjoyment of education-based high school sports and activities. In fact, in the 103-year history of organized high school sports in the United States, good sportsmanship has been one of the most important outcomes of high school activity programs. NFHS playing rules are written to encourage sportsmanship. Participation in these programs should promote respect, integrity, and sportsmanship. However, for these ideals to occur, everyone involved in these programs must be doing their part. The NFHS is concerned that unsporting behavior in education-based athletics has increased across all sports. As a result, the NFHS has made sportsmanship the No. 1 Point of Emphasis for the 2022-23 school year.

Sportsmanship, or good sporting behavior, is about treating one another with respect and exhibiting appropriate behavior. It is about being fair, honest, and caring. When these types of appropriate behavior occur, competitive play is more enjoyable for everyone. Coaches set the tone at athletic contests with their display of sportsmanship. If these individuals act in a sportsmanlike manner, their behavior sets the tone for players, spectators and others. If coaches, however, are complaining constantly about the decision of contest officials, spectators are more likely to do the same. There must be a collaborative, working relationship between contest officials and game administration to promote good sportsmanship and safely conduct the contest. Everyone has their role to play in creating a positive, sportsmanlike atmosphere at contests. Officials should focus on the actions of players, coaches and other bench/sideline personnel. A positive, open line of communication between officials and coaches ultimately results in a better contest for everyone involved. Contest officials, however, should never engage with spectators who are exhibiting unsporting behavior. Once the contest begins, school administration is responsible for dealing with unruly spectators. A proactive approach by school administration includes monitoring the behavior of spectators and intervening as needed. If spectators are using demeaning or profane language at officials – or at others in the stands – those individuals should be removed from the contest by school administration. In recent years, a heightened level of unsportsmanlike behavior has been occurring by spectators at high school sporting events, and it must be stopped. The use of demeaning language, or hate speech, by students, parents, and other fans must cease. High school sports and other activities exist to lift people up, not demean or tear people down. The goal is to treat everyone fairly and treat each other with respect. Any speech or harassment that is insulting, demeaning, or hurtful will not be tolerated. High schools must establish a culture that values the worth of every single person – both players on the school’s team and players on the opposing team. There must be a no-tolerance policy regarding behavior that shows disrespect for another individual. Good sports win with humility, lose with grace and do both with dignity. It takes the efforts of everyone every day to ensure that sportsmanship remains one of the top priorities in education-based activity programs.

TIME BETWEEN INNINGS

As a point of emphasis, umpires and coaches should pay strict attention to the 60-second time limit between half-innings. In accordance with Rule 6-2-5, at the beginning of each half-inning, no more than one minute may be used to deliver no more than five pitches to the catcher or other teammate. The one-minute time limit begins from the third out of the previous half-inning. A pitcher returning to the pitching position in the same half-inning will not be granted any warm-up pitches. Umpires may authorize more pitches during inclement weather or if a pitcher was removed due to injury or by rule.

JEWELRY AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

The rule prohibiting jewelry has been removed, allowing team personnel to now wear jewelry; however, the rule regarding the use of electronics is still in place. The use of electronic devices by team personnel to transmit or record information pertaining to their players or team’s performance is only permitted within the dugout. Items such as smartwatches are permitted to be utilized as a watch but cannot be used to transmit or receive data outside of the dugout.

COMPARABLE DRYING AGENTS

Pitchers are not permitted to use any substance on the ball or on contact points of the pitching hand or fingers; also, no foreign substances may be applied to the ball. If a pitcher licks the fingers, the player must wipe the fingers prior to touching the ball. Comparable drying agents listed on the USA website (USAsoftball.org) are permitted, and powdered rosin is also permitted. It is not necessary to wipe off the drying agent before making contact with the ball.

End of Game (Suspended/Complete Game) Procedures

Please review the suspended game policies below.

Typically, softball games end when the team behind in the score completes its turn at bat in the seventh inning (or an extra inning) or when the home team scores the leading run in the seventh inning (or an extra inning). The following exceptions to this are:

- Coaches and the plate umpire may mutually agree to end a game early. This could be in situations where there is a tremendous lead after 2 or 3 innings and both coaches simply agree to end the game. The score stands and the game is over. (NFHS 4.3.2 applies to regular season and tournament competition)
- Anytime a team has a 10-run lead and the team behind in the score has completed its turn at bat in the fifth inning OR the home team takes a 10-run lead in the fifth inning, the game ends.

Though a game also ends when it is forfeited under NFHS Rule 4-3, no OHSAA contest can be forfeited until after it has started. A game that is not started is considered a "NO CONTEST," regardless of reason.

Suspended Game Procedures

A game called for any reason, where a winner cannot be determined (NF 4-3-1), or any game called at any time for mechanical failure (artificial lights, water systems, etc.) will be treated as a suspended game. If the game is to be completed, it will be continued from the point of suspension, with the lineup and batting order of each team exactly the same as the lineup and batting order at the moment of suspension subject to the rules of the game. Such game will be completed unless both coaches agree not to do so. Suspended games that are never completed simply go down as a "No Contest."

A game which has gone five innings and is called while an inning is in progress and before it is completed and the following situation prevails shall be a suspended game:

1. The visiting team has scored one or more runs to tie the score or to take the lead and the home team has not retaken the lead.
2. A suspended game that is not completed at a later date due to the inability to reschedule is considered a "No Contest," not counted in the won-lost statistics, and both teams are permitted to schedule another contest.

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 or vice versa, etc.

Examples of Completed/Suspended Games

In a regular season game, the home team is ahead 2-0 after FIVE innings and:

- The game is called prior to the start of the sixth inning due to darkness: **Ruling: COMPLETE GAME**
- The first batter in the top of the sixth inning is at bat with any count on the batter and the game cannot be completed: **Ruling: COMPLETE GAME**
- The first batter in the top of the sixth inning reaches base and the game is called. **Ruling: COMPLETE GAME**
- The visiting team scores one run in the top of the sixth inning and the game is called at any time during the sixth inning. **Ruling: COMPLETE GAME**
- The visiting team scores two runs in the top of the sixth inning and the sixth inning is not complete, nor does the home team re-take the lead in the bottom half of the sixth inning. **Ruling: SUSPENDED GAME**
- The visiting team scores two or three runs in the top of the sixth inning and the sixth inning is not completed nor does the home team retake the lead in the bottom of the sixth inning. **Ruling: SUSPENDED GAME**
- The visiting team scores two or three runs in the top of the sixth inning and the home team retakes the lead in the bottom of the sixth. The game is called later in the bottom half of the sixth inning or after six complete innings. **Ruling: COMPLETE GAME**

NFHS Permitted State Adoptions for Ohio

The OHSAA recognizes and adheres to all NFHS Rules. However there are regulations that permit state association adoptions to specific rules. The NFHS Rules carefully permit each state the right to adopt certain rules that are specific to that state and are known as “**State Adoptions.**” These “**State Adoptions**” do not cause any fundamental change in the game from state to state. These permitted fastpitch “**State Adoptions**” and Ohio’s decision on the adoption are as follows:

Rule 1-2-1 Note – A Double First Base is permitted

Effective the 2017 season, this is now adopted and required in Ohio.

Ohio’s Stance: ADOPTED in Ohio

Rule 3-2-1 – State Associations may, on an individual basis, permit a player to participate while wearing a different style uniform for religious reasons, inclement weather, etc.

Approved for the beginning of the 2018 season, Ohio permits a different style uniform to be worn for inclement weather such as a sweatshirt or jacket. No request needs to be submitted.

Ohio permits a different style uniform to be worn for religious reasons with a written request stating the player’s name, grade and school. Further, per OHSAA GSR 20.2, regardless of NFHS Playing rules, Ohio state law requires that officials/contest administrators not prohibit, require a waiver, or create any obstruction to wearing religious apparel when competing or participating in interscholastic athletics or extracurricular activities, 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.

Ohio’s Stance: ADOPTED in Ohio

Rule 3-2-4 – By state association adoption, for special occasions, a commemorative or memorial patch, not to exceed 4 square inches, may be worn on the jersey.

Ohio does permit this with a written request.

Ohio’s Stance: ADOPTED in Ohio

Rule 4-2-3 – Permits states an option on how they agree to end a shortened game

Game ending procedures may be determined.

By mutual agreement of the opposing coaches and the umpire-in-chief a game may be shortened, or the game terminated at any time.

A game shall end any time after 5 innings or after 1/2 innings when a team is 10 or more runs behind and has completed its term at bat.

If a game is called prior to the completion of a full inning after the fifth inning, the game becomes a suspended game in the following situation:

The visiting team has scored one or more runs to tie the score or to take the lead, and the home team has not retaken the lead.

Ohio's Stance: **ADOPTED in Ohio for REGULAR SEASON ONLY**

If a suspended game is to be completed it will be continued from the point of suspension with the lineup and batting order of each team the same as the lineup and batting order at the moment of suspension, subject to the rules of the game (substitution may be made). Any suspended game, if it is to be resumed, will be picked up from the point of interruption. **Once a game has started, it will not start over.** Any suspended game, regardless of where it was interrupted, will be re-started from the point where play was suspended (see the previous page for additional examples).

Ohio's Stance: **ADOPTED in Ohio**

Rule 4-2-3 – NOTE 2

By state association adoption, the number of innings for one or both games in a doubleheader may be scheduled for five innings if both coaches agree. Current state association game-ending procedures still apply.

Ohio's Stance: **ADOPTED in Ohio**

Rule 4-3-1 – Permits a state to determine how it counts a suspended game

By state association adoption, a regulation called game, where a winner cannot be determined, shall be counted as 1/2 game won and 1/2 game lost for each team.

Ohio's Stance: **NOT ADOPTED in Ohio**

Relative to Tournament Play in Ohio: Any suspended OHSAA tournament game shall be continued from the point of suspension at a later time. All OHSAA tournament games shall be played to completion per the playing rules (the 10-run rule would be applicable).

Ohio's Stance: **ADOPTED in Ohio**

Rule 4-3-1a – Permits each state to decide how to determine a forfeit

State associations are authorized to specify the time frame and/or circumstances before a forfeit shall be declared for a late arrival by one of its teams.

The following has been ADOPTED in Ohio:

No interscholastic contest is subject to forfeiture unless the contest has been started. Any scheduled regular season contest that is not started due to unforeseen circumstances such as, failure of a team to arrive, strikes and school closings are "No Contest." Contests not played are not included in won-lost statistics.

The OHSAA Tournament

The OHSAA sponsors the softball tournament in four divisions. The softball tournament regulations are posted on the OHSAA website in late February/early March. Each of the OHSAA's District Athletic Boards organize and conduct softball tournaments at the sectional and district levels. They are conducted according to the tournament regulations adopted by the Board of Directors. The Board approved the use of the division assignments based on EMIS numbers, and the Competitive Balance data for the Tournament.

Tournament Draw Dates

The draw date for tournaments is April 30th at 2:00 p.m.

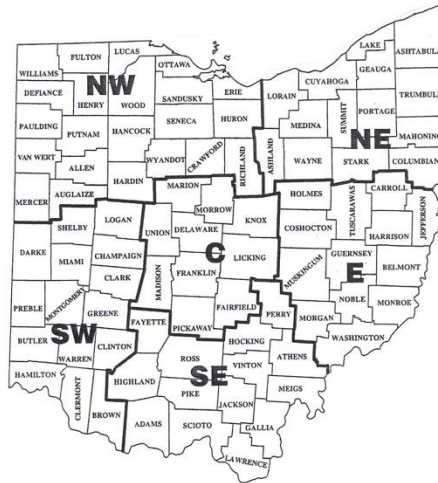
State Tournament Dates, Site and Order of Games

June 1-3— Firestone Stadium, Akron
Division III, II, I, IV

Athletic Districts

Representation to the regional tournament (the number of Regional 'qualifiers') from district winners is determined by a formula based upon the number of teams participating in the previous year's tournament. With a few exceptions, most schools in the counties listed below are assigned sites from the respective District Athletic Boards. You are encouraged to visit their websites for additional information.

- Central District: www.ohsaa.org/cdab
- East District: www.ohsaa.org/edab
- Northeast District: www.ohsaa.org/nedab
- Northwest District: www.ohsaa.org/nwdab
- Southeast District: www.ohsaa.org/sedab
- Southwest District: www.ohsaa.org/swdab



Rating and Voting for Officials

OHSAA tournament officials are selected by a process approved by the Board of Directors. That 'process' is an important one for both coaches AND officials and is the basis for officials' assignments to OHSAA Tournaments. To make this process work, it requires coaches and administrators to do their part. Officials take this process seriously and it is in everyone's best interest to have the correct input for the assignment of officials. A few important things to note:

1. Coaches **RATE** officials. There are three other categories that **VOTE** for officials. Those three categories are: athletic administrators, each local officials' association and a "stakeholders group" that includes OHSAA staff, certified assigners and approved observers.

2. Ratings are best done at the conclusion of a game but need to be done by the end of the season. Officials are **NOT** able to see how a coach rated them.
3. “Pools” of officials are created as a result of ratings and votes. These pools are arranged into a “state pool,” “regional pool” and “sectional/district pool.” Each pool has more officials than are needed at that level. Pools are created by mathematically by calculating the total of each of the four categories to equal a score
4. District Athletic Boards utilize the various pools to assign officials to **sectional and district tournaments** in their respective athletic districts. The process of assignment from approved pools is at the discretion of each District Athletic Board.
Note: The total score is not made available to those making assignments; merely the ‘pool’ itself is made available to them.
5. The OHSAA Office utilizes the pools to assign officials to the **regional and state tournaments**.

Rating Instructions

1. Login to your myOHSAA account.
2. Click the “Schools” icon near the upper right corner to access your school’s myOHSAA account.
3. Click the blue button labeled with the name of your high school.
4. If you are a coach, click the orange “Rate Game Officials” button near the upper left corner. If you are an athletic administrator, click the “Rate Game Officials” link in the left navigation.
5. Once you are on the Rating Game Officials page, click the star (green or red) to access the rating form for that sport. Stars that are gray are sports that are currently out of season.
6. Follow the instructions at the top of each sport specific rating page and click on the green “Add Officials to Rate” button.
 - Type the first few letters of the official’s last name or their permit number and wait for the list of matching officials to appear below the input box.
 - Select the official from the list to add them to the input box.
 - Once the official is added to the box, select the appropriate rating and click the “Save” button.
7. The official’s name and rating will be added and displayed on the “Rate Officials” page.
8. Continue adding officials using the “Add Official to Rate” button.
9. Officials can be added to the rating form at different times throughout the season until the deadline. A maximum of 50 officials can be added to the rating form.
10. Ratings can also be changed using the “Edit” link after the official’s rating entry on the rating form until the deadline.

Sportsmanship

As we prepare for the upcoming seasons, the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) wishes to emphasize to each of you the importance of your leadership role in the promotion of sportsmanship, ethics and integrity. The professional manner in which officials and coaches conduct themselves prior to, during and following a contest unquestionably impacts the behavior of others who may be involved.

The OHSAA has joined the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) in its quest to improve sportsmanship, ethics and integrity. We are involved in an ongoing campaign in every sport to do just that. Printed below is the mission statement of the NFHS concerning sportsmanship, ethics, and integrity. Please take the time to read and digest this statement and then carefully consider your impact upon students, officials, coaches, and fans. Thank you and have a great season!

The Ohio High School Athletic Association challenges all of us in the softball community to take positive steps toward the goal of attaining the high ideal of good sportsmanship. It is the responsibility of each of us to serve as a positive role model and set high expectations for others.

The OHSFSCA and Sportsmanship

The Ohio High School Fast Pitch Coaches Association stands tall in its commitment to good sportsmanship. The school-based experience is one that affords tremendous opportunities to student-athletes that they will remember for a lifetime. Those experiences are dependent on the role model the head coach provides. The OHSFSCA encourages all coaches to exhibit behavior that serves as a role model for the student-athletes we serve. In conjunction with the OHSAA's Sportsmanship, Ethics and Integrity (SEI) Committee, the OHSFSCA annually selects a recipient of the SEI Award that is recognized at the state tournament.

The Administrator's Role in Sportsmanship

Athletic departments are comprehensive, pre-eminent teaching departments with a subject matter all their own: self-confidence, leadership, teamwork, discipline, perseverance, respect for others, strategic thinking, dedication, the importance of rules, and sportsmanship. These are true life lessons and participation in athletics provides another forum for learning. Coaches and Officials are responsible for promoting sportsmanship and positive behavior on the field. Administrators, we need your continued assistance in promoting sportsmanship and controlling fan behavior in the stands! Let the parents and fans know what you expect!

The Coach's Role in Sportsmanship

Your athletes will demonstrate the attitudes and behaviors they have learned from you, either through direct instruction or through observation of your actions. ***Never underestimate the influence you have on your players!*** You must:

- Abide by and teach the rules of the game in letter and in spirit.
- Set a good example for players and spectators to follow.
- Respect the integrity and judgment of game officials. Treating them with respect, even if you disagree with their judgment, will serve to create a positive impression of you and your team.
- Display modesty in victory and graciousness in defeat.
- Develop a program that rewards participants and spectators for displaying proper sportsmanship and enforces penalties on those who do not abide by sportsmanship standards.

It is difficult to develop a great pitcher, a great catcher or a great outfielder. That is true. However, your greatest challenge is to develop mature young adults who will become great citizens and role models in your community.

The Student-Athlete's Role in Sportsmanship

You serve as a role model for your younger siblings, young fans in the stands, your teammates, and your classmates. Set high expectations for everyone and help them follow-through! You must:

- Accept and understand the seriousness of your responsibility, and the privilege of representing your school and the community.
- Live up to the standards of sportsmanship established by the school administration and the coaching staff.
- Learn the rules of the game thoroughly and discuss them with others. This will assist everyone in the achievement of a better understanding and appreciation of the game.
- Treat opponents as you would like to be treated with respect.
- Respect the integrity and judgment of game officials. Treating them with respect, even if you disagree with their judgment, will serve to create a positive impression of you and your team.

The Official's Role in Sportsmanship

Your job is not an easy one, but the official must be aware that they are an important component in the educational development of students. To carry out this responsibility, you must:

- Know the rules and mechanics of our sport and the philosophy behind them.
- Get fit and stay fit. An official with all of the rules and mechanics knowledge and people skills in the world does no good if he or she cannot physically keep up with play.
- Maintain professional and ethical relationships with athletic administrators, especially in the area of fulfilling game contracts.
- Work cooperatively with fellow officials during games and within the referees' association to improve members' performances.
- Maintain at all times and when interacting with all participants, an attitude of civility and professionalism.
- Practice effective preventive officiating as much as possible before, during, and after a game. The quiet word, proper signals, timely verbal instructions, a simple thank-you to a player for avoiding an unsporting act, and well-thought-out pre-game conferences with the teams and other game officials will result in an improvement of sportsmanship by eliminating the chance for things to go wrong.

The National Association of Sports Officials (NASO) conducted a survey of 550 sports officials and asked “*what is the number-one problem in our games today?*” Not too surprising, the number one response was “Poor Sportsmanship.” As a result, the NASO brought together some of the best and brightest in youth, high school, collegiate and pro sports to examine the issue and explore the official’s role in promoting positive on-field behavior. The results were published in the book at the right and identified 3 critical ideas:

1. What exactly is at Stake
2. What is Expected of Officials, and,
3. What steps need to be taken

As a result, the following are important results of this study and publication:

1. 65% of respondents indicated their respective associations do not do *enough* to help improve sportsmanship.
2. 89% of officials responding consider themselves PARTNERS with players, coaches and administrators in improving sportsmanship.
3. 54% of officials responding indicated they felt they DO have the training, authority and knowledge to make an impact.

Ejections Procedures

- All ejections require a report to be completed and filed with the OHSAA.
- Ejection reports are completed and submitted electronically through myOHSAA. This automatically sends the report to the school.
- In the event of a coach or player ejection, he/she is ejected from ALL GAMES for the remainder of the day of the ejection PLUS all contests at all levels until two regular season/tournament contests are played at the same level of the ejection or disqualification. Ejected coaches must also pay a \$100.00 fine and complete the National Federation of State High School Association’s (NFHS) “Teaching and Modeling Behavior” online course within 30 days of the ejection. The responsibility for compliance rests with the school’s administration.
- Ejected **COACHES** are required to LEAVE the premises immediately. If no assistant coach is present, the game is over and the score stands ‘as is’.
- Ejected **PLAYERS** are to remain in the BENCH AREA under the supervision of the coach.
- Any player or coach ejected for fighting is ejected from ALL GAMES for the remainder of the day of the ejection and will be ineligible for all contests at all levels until **FOUR** regular season/tournament contests are played at the same level as the ejection or disqualification.
- **ALL EJECTIONS ARE FINAL AND NOT PERMITTED TO BE APPEALED** per the OHSAA’s Board of Directors.

Concussion Management

Implementation of State Law and NFHS Playing Rules Related to Concussed Athletes and Return to Play Protocol

It is important for all individuals involved in interscholastic athletics to recognize the potential for catastrophic injury and even death from concussions. Thus, it is extremely important that each coach, administrator, contest official and medical support personnel review their responsibilities in protecting students. Further both students and parents have responsibilities in this area as well.

Note: It has always been the ultimate responsibility of the coaching staff, in all sports, to ensure that students are only put into practice or contests if they are physically capable of performing. However, all individuals involved in the conduct of interscholastic competition have responsibilities in this endeavor.

In January 2011, the OHSAA Board of Directors adopted a sports regulation which incorporated the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) playing rules related to concussion recognition and management. On April 26, 2013, legislation adopted by Ohio's General Assembly on concussion and head injuries in youth sports became effective. On February 14, 2013, the OHSAA Board of Directors mandated that these regulations become effective on April 26, 2013, for the remainder of the spring sports season and thereafter. This OHSAA regulation, as amended to incorporate this recent legislation, now reads:

Any student, while practicing for or competing in an interscholastic contest, who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with having sustained a concussion or head injury (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion or balance problems) shall be immediately removed from the practice or contest by either of the following:

- 1.) The individual who is serving as the student's coach during that practice or competition.
- 2.) An individual who is serving as a contest official or referee during that practice or competition.

Return to Play Protocol

If a student is removed from practice or competition due to a suspected concussion or head injury, the coach or referee who removes the student shall not permit the student, **ON THE SAME DAY THE STUDENT IS REMOVED**, to return to that practice or competition or to participate in any other practice or competition for which the coach or contest official is responsible. Thereafter, which means no earlier than the next day, the coach or contest officials shall not permit the student to return to practice or competition until both of the following conditions are satisfied:

- 1.) The student's condition is assessed by either of the following:
 - a. A physician, who is a person authorized under Chapter 4731 of the Ohio Revised Code (OCR) to practice medicine and surgery or osteopathic medicine or surgery (M.D. or D.O.)
 - b. Any other licensed health care provider that the school district board of education or other governing authority of a chartered or non-chartered nonpublic school, authorizes to assess the student who has been removed from practice or competition.
- 2.) The student receives **written authorization** that it is safe for the student to return to practice or competition from a physician or other licensed health care provider authorized to grant the clearance. Click here to retrieve the OHSAA's Medical Authorization to Return to Play (RTP) form <https://www.ohsaa.org/Portals/0/Sports-Medicine/AuthorizationToReenter.pdf>

A school district board of education or governing authority of a chartered or non-chartered nonpublic school may authorize a licensed health care provider who is NOT a PHYSICIAN to make an assessment and grant authorization for a student to return to participation ONLY if the provider is acting in accordance with one of the following as applicable to the provider's authority to practice in Ohio:

- 1.) In consultation with a physician;
- 2.) Pursuant to the referral of a physician;
- 3.) In collaboration with a physician, or

- 4.) Under the supervision of a physician.

Note: A physician or other licensed health care provider who makes an assessment or grants clearance for a student to return to participation may be a volunteer.

Coaches Requirements

All coaches, paid and volunteer, must possess a current Department of Education-issued Pupil Activity Program/Coaching Permit. When renewing this permit, the coach will be required to complete an online concussion education course as stipulated in the section entitled - Approved Online Concussion Education Course. This course is valid for three years.

Contest Officials Requirements

New legislation signed into law by the Governor provides that no school “shall permit” an individual to referee interscholastic athletic contests unless the individual holds a Pupil Activity Program/Coaching Permit or has successfully completed within the last three years a training program in concussion recognition. Therefore, all OHSAA licensed officials shall possess either a current Department of Education-issued Pupil Activity Program/Coaching Permit or show evidence of completing an approved online concussion education course as stipulated in the section entitled Approved Online Concussion Education Courses. This course is valid for three years from the date of completion.

Student and Parent Requirements

All students and their parents or legal guardians shall review and sign the “Concussion Information Sheet” which has been developed by the Ohio Department of Health and which shall be distributed by OHSAA member schools to all students and their parents prior to each sports season. Students and parents shall review and sign this form each year and should keep a copy of the form. In addition, parents and students are encouraged to complete an approved concussion education course. The form can be accessed here:

<https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odh/know-our-programs/child-injury-prevention/media/concussion-information-sheet-youth-sports-organizations>

NFHS Suggested Medical Clearance Return to Play Protocol

- 1.) No exertional activity until asymptomatic.
- 2.) When the athlete appears clear, begin low-impact activity such as walking, stationary bike, etc.
- 3.) Initiate aerobic activity fundamental to specific sport such as running or skating and may also begin progressive strength training activities.
- 4.) Begin non-contact skill drills specific to sport such as dribbling, fielding, batting, etc.
- 5.) Full contact in practice setting.
- 6.) Game play/competition.
 - Athlete must remain asymptomatic to progress to the next level. (It is often suggested that an athlete not be allowed to progress more than one level per day.)
 - If symptoms recur, athlete must return to previous level and should be reevaluated by an appropriate health care professional.
 - Medical check should occur before contact. (Final written clearance from the medical professional shall be obtained before the athlete engages in any unrestricted or full contact activity.)

OHSAA Concussion Authorization to Reenter Form

<https://www.ohsaa.org/Portals/0/Sports-Medicine/AuthorizationToReenter.pdf>

OHSAA Concussion Report Form

<https://ohsaaweb.blob.core.windows.net/files/Sports-Medicine/OHSAAConcussionReport.pdf>

Communicable Disease Procedures

Though most schools have a Certified Athletic Trainer present at varsity contests **and** all coaches are required to maintain a valid Pupil Activity Certificate through the Ohio Department of Education that includes a Sports' First Aid component, it is important to keep up to date on the remote risk that blood borne infectious diseases can be transmitted during basketball practice and contests. For example, Hepatitis B can be present in blood as well as other bodily fluids. Procedures for reducing the potential transmission of these infectious diseases should include, but should not be limited to the following:

1. The bleeding must be stopped, the open wound covered and if there is an excessive amount of blood on the uniform, it must be changed before the athlete may participate.
2. Routine use of gloves or other precautions to prevent skin and mucous-membrane exposure when contact with blood and other body fluids is anticipated.
3. Immediately wash hands and other skin surfaces if contaminated (in contact) with blood or other body fluids. Wash hands immediately after removing gloves.
4. Clean all contaminated surfaces and equipment with an appropriate disinfectant before competition resumes.
5. Practice proper disposal procedures to prevent injuries caused by needles, scalpels and other sharp instruments or devices.
6. Although saliva has not been implicated in HIV transmission, to minimize the need for emergency mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, mouthpieces, resuscitation bags, or other ventilation devices should be available for use.
7. Athletic trainers/coaches with bleeding or oozing skin conditions should refrain from all direct athletic care until the condition resolves.
8. Contaminated towels should be properly disposed of/disinfected.
9. Follow acceptable guidelines in the immediate control of bleeding and when handling dressings, mouthguards and other articles containing body fluids.

For more information, go to the OHSAA's website at: <https://www.ohsaa.org/communicablediseases>

Acclimatization and Exertional Heat Illness Precautions

All coaching and medical staff personnel shall observe the following precautions for **all sports competed outdoors and/or in a hot, humid environment.**

- **Stress to participants the importance of properly hydrating** during the day leading up to the contest/training, and to drink 8-to-12 ounces of water or sport drinks 20 minutes prior to the contest or any training session. This procedure can help prevent problems during practice and contests.

- **Schools shall have unlimited amounts of water** and sport drinks on hand during practices and contests, and coaches in team sports should be prepared to play a lot of players rather than just the starters.
- **Contest officials are permitted to establish predetermined breaks** during contests, such as halfway through each period. At that time, players can drink water and remove their equipment, which should also take place at halftime (the more skin that is exposed, the more cooling that can take place). **This provision also applies to all sports.**
- **Contest managers are advised to monitor conditions** for others affiliated with the contest, like cheerleaders, band members, coaches, officials and especially spectators.
- **Please review the OHSAA policy on inclement weather and lightning.** In short, upon the first indication that thunderstorm development is within 10 miles of the match site, the activity shall be suspended until 30 minutes after the storm has left this 10-mile zone. Individuals should move to a safe area until the storm has moved away.
- **Know both the Temperature and Humidity.** The greater the humidity, the more difficult it is for the body to cool itself. Test the air prior to practice or a game using a wet bulb, globe, temperature index (WBGT index) which is based on the combined effects of air temperature, relative humidity, radiant heat and air movement. The following precautions are recommended by the Korey Stringer Institute when using the WBGT Index (ACSM's Guidelines for the Team Physician, 1991):

Below 64F Unlimited activities
65-72F Moderate risk
74-82F High Risk
82F+ Very high risk

WBGT	Recommendation (KSM P&P, Korey Stringer Institute)
<79.7°F	Normal activities Three separate 3 minute breaks per hour
79.8-84.6°F	Three separate 4 minute breaks per hour Helmets and other equipment should be removed when the athlete is not directly involved with the competition, drill or practice and it is not otherwise required
84.7-87.6°F	Maximum practice time of 2 hours Four separate 4 minute breaks per hour FB: Limit to helmet, shoulder pads, and shorts during practice Considering postponing practice to later in the day Allow athletes to change to dry shirts and shorts at defined intervals
87.8-89.7°F	Maximum of 1 hour of training with four separate 5 minute breaks in that hour No additional conditioning allowed FB/LAX: No helmets, should pads, or other equipment is permitted Consider postponing practice to later in the day Allow athletes to change to dry shirts and shorts at defined intervals
>89.8°F	No outdoor workouts No indoor workouts unless air conditioned

Frequently Asked Questions

This section is to provide some insight into some frequently asked questions throughout the season. Coaches are encouraged to consult his or her athletic administrator before contacting the OHSAA office.

When is Softball's "No-Contact Period"?

Answer: The no contact period for softball begins August 1 and ends August 31.

Can Middle School Players practice or play with High School players?

Answer: No. OHSAA Bylaws prohibit middle school players from practicing or competing with High School players during the season.

Can Middle School Players participate in Open Gyms/Fields at the High School level?

Answer: Yes. OHSAA Bylaws and Sports Regulations do not preclude anyone from participating in Open Gyms/Fields/Facilities.

Can Middle School Players participate with High School Players during "Summer Ball" or "Fall Ball"?

Answer: Yes. Any competition that occurs outside the defined season of play is not regulated by the OHSAA.

Can Middle School Players Be Included with High School Players during Individual Instruction permitted by Sports Regulation 8.2?

Answer: Yes. There is no restriction on age groups relative to this regulation. Any individual receiving instruction must be counted as one of the six (6) permitted in all combined facilities where the instruction is taking place.

What can we as coaches do during an open gym/field?

Answer: Coaches may supervise only. Open Gyms/Fields cannot be made mandatory. Open Gyms/Fields must be 'free and unstructured play, so NO coaching may take place during them. They are defined in their entirety in General Sports Regulation 10 on page 67. Under no circumstances may Open Gyms/Fields be a disguise for an early start to practice. Language in the "Individual Instruction" regulation (General Sports Regulation 8.3) delineates the permissions in that regulation from those in Open Gyms.

Who can volunteer to be a member of the coaching staff?

Answer: To work with student-athletes in any school program, an individual must receive his/her Pupil Activity Permit through the Ohio Department of Education and be approved by the school's Board of Education. Once achieving these requirements, a volunteer falls under all Bylaws and Sports Regulations of the OHSAA which limits them to the same out of season coaching limitations as paid staff members.

Can a volunteer from the school team coach players during the "off-season" "travel softball" (or other non-school Softball)?

Answer: YES, all school coaches can coach non-school softball outside the season with players from your school teams on it. The following regulations still apply:

1. The No-Contact Period. It still exists and that STILL means that during that period of time you will NOT be permitted to coach.
2. The regulations that limit any non-school team to only 4 players that played for the same school team still exists. That has not changed and there is no plan TO change it. And for the record, whether a school coach or a non-school coach is coaching a non-school team, the "50% rule" applies and there are no plans to change it.
3. There can be no rotating players from your school teams from one non-school game to another. In other words, your permission to coach a team that consists of 4 players from your school does NOT give you the permission to use 4 different players in each and every game you play in. This is true whether you are coaching the non-school team or not, rotating players to 'get around' the 4 player limit is not permitted. You simply cannot have 5 or more on a non-school roster and only play 4 in each game.

If my son or daughter plays on a non-Interscholastic team (such as “club” or “travel”) can I coach them if I am a school coach?

Answer: YES, see previous question.

Can a player on my team participate in non-interscholastic team(s) at the same time as the season?

Answer: No. Sports’ Regulation 7.2 prohibits student-athletes from participating in programs such as travel ball, AAU, etc. during the school season.

When CAN a player on my team participate in non-Interscholastic Softball?

Answer: As soon as the school season is complete.

How many players can play together on a non-Interscholastic team (such as but not limited to “travel” or “Summer Ball” or “Fall Ball”)?

Answer: FOUR (4). OHSAA Sports Regulations limit the number of participants on any non-interscholastic roster to no more than 50% of student-athletes from the same school. More specifically, for the sport of softball no more than four (4) are permitted on a team. However, from June 1-July 31 there is no limit to the number of players from the same school that may participate on a non-interscholastic team.

How are players identified when Middle School/Junior High players play with High School players in the off-season?

Answer: Players are considered middle school/junior high until August 1 of their 9th grade year and are considered separate as it relates to participating on non-interscholastic teams. For example, four 8th graders could participate on a “Club” (non-interscholastic) team along with four 9th graders from the same school. They are considered separate.

Are players permitted to receive “private” instruction from individuals such as “outside/private” pitching instructors or hitting instructors DURING the season of play?

Answer: Yes, if your school athletic administration approves it. Sports’ Regulation 8.2.3 allows individuals to receive Individual Skill Instruction any time in Individual or Group lessons.

One of my players was selected to play in a BASKETBALL or SOCCER All-Star game during the softball season. Is she permitted to play in that contest?

Answer: Yes. The regulations prohibit players from playing non-interscholastic softball during the softball season. The rules does not preclude participation in a different sport other than softball.

May a softball player play on an AAU Basketball team during the softball season?

Answer: Yes, the player would not be violating any OHSAA regulations.

Given the above, does this also mean that a player could be on our school’s track team while also being on the school’s softball team?

Answer: Yes. Any limitations on that would be imposed by individual schools.

Can players participate in “Hitting Leagues” during the off-season?

Answer: Yes, however, they are limited to the 50% limitation of four players from the same school on the same “hitting league” team.

Since weather issues often force games to be made up later in the season, how late can we actually play a game?

Answer: The last date for a game to be played is the Saturday after the state tournament

IF we have to make up games late in the season, can our players play for their summer teams while still completing our regular schedule?

Answer: No. All non-interscholastic rules are in effect during the season, regardless of how late the season goes.

What is meant by the “Non-Interscholastic Date” and when is it?

Answer: The non-interscholastic date for softball is March 25, 2023. After this date, all team members must cease any non-interscholastic participation. If he or she choose to participate while being a member of a team, he or she becomes immediately ineligible for the OHSAA tournament and is subject to other penalties.

I have a player that has been selected to participate in a “Home Run Derby” contest during the season. Is she permitted to do this?

Answer: Yes. A contest such as this is not considered as “non-interscholastic softball” and is permitted to do this. However, please note the prizes being offered and the amateur rules associated with the contest.

Can I travel out of state to play a contest?

Answer: Yes, with certain restrictions. Teams may travel out of state to a bordering state (contiguous state) an unlimited number of times to play. Teams may travel to non-bordering (contiguous states) one time per sport per season to compete provided there is no loss of school time.

Can I take my team out of state just to practice?

Answer: No.

Can my team practice while out of state to a permitted tournament?

Answer: Yes. OHSAA Bylaw 9 permits a team to practice out of state while part of an approved out of state competition so long as the practice does not result in a loss of school time.

Are we permitted to schedule MORE than 27 contests in the event we have rainouts?

Answer: No. Teams are not permitted to schedule and play more than twenty-seven (27) regular season contests.

Can I have a scrimmage during the season or during tournament time?

Answer: Yes. As long as a team has a scrimmage remaining, they may use it at any time. It IS important to note that any scrimmage with another school must be a scrimmage for THAT school also; it cannot be a ‘game’ for one school and a ‘scrimmage’ for another school.

Can teams practice with another school?

Answer: Yes, BUT, it must be counted as a scrimmage.

Can a school team play against a non-school team?

Answer: Yes. Ohio is one of the few states that does not regulate competition.