

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE
HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS



NEWS RELEASE

Rules Changes Approved for High School Baseball, Softball

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Elliot Hopkins, Theresia Wynns

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (July 7, 2015) – Rules changes for the 2016 baseball and softball seasons were made at rules committee meetings last month in Indianapolis. Those changes were subsequently approved by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Board of Directors.

BASEBALL

Beginning with the 2016 season, umpires will be required to issue a warning to coaches before restriction to the bench/dugout or ejecting them as part of a new penalty progression to promote preventive officiating.

The revision to Rule 3-3-1 Penalty was one of two changes recommended by the NFHS Baseball Rules Committee at its June 7-9 meeting.

Previously, issuing a warning to an offending coach was optional for umpires, who will now restrict to the bench/dugout or eject coaches who commit a violation after previously being warned for a minor offense. However, coaches can still be ejected on a first offense if it is deemed to be major.

Also part of the modification to Rule 3-3-1 Penalty, coaches who receive a written warning (Rule 10-2-3) will be restricted to the bench and/or dugout for the remainder of the game.

“The new rule change has initiated a penalty progression, starting with a written warning, restriction to the bench/dugout and subsequent ejection from the contest,” said Elliot Hopkins, NFHS director of sports and student services and liaison to the Baseball Rules Committee.

The changes to Rule 3-3-1 Penalty will help to de-escalate contentious situations and allow coaches to dictate their status in the game by their behavior, Hopkins said.

“A successful game official practices preventive officiating, and this new penalty progression will allow the official to issue penalties that give the coach the opportunity to remain in the game and teach his players.”

The other change approved by the Baseball Rules Committee is an addition to Rule 3-3-1. Article “q” will state that a coach, player, substitute, attendant or other bench personnel shall not “have any physical contact, spitting, kicking of dirt or any other physical action directed toward an umpire.” The addition of article “q” serves to clarify other behaviors that would result in an ejection from the game, Hopkins said.

“Bad behavior that is being imitated from other levels has no place in education-based athletics and will not be tolerated,” Hopkins said. “If we are to continue to use sport to teach life lessons, then we have to ensure that appropriate behavior and conduct are modeled from those adults in the role of coach/teacher.”

In addition to the two rules changes, the Baseball Rules Committee approved three Points of Emphasis for the 2016 season. Points of emphasis are developed by NFHS rules committees and should receive special focus and attention by officials, coaches, players, fans and other leaders within the high school setting.

Points of Emphasis developed by the Baseball Rules Committee for the 2016 season are as follows:

- 1. INTERMEDIATE PENALTIES/RESTRICTION TO THE BENCH/DUGOUT**
- 2. PROPER CATCHER'S EQUIPMENT**
- 3. SPORTSMANSHIP – CELEBRATIONS AROUND OR NEAR THE PLATE AND POST-GAME EJECTIONS**

SOFTBALL

In softball, one rule change was recommended by the NFHS Softball Rules Committee at its June 15-17 meeting. In the new Article 4 of Rule 2-57, the committee provided a standard definition of a “projected” substitute.

Rule 3-3-3 prohibits the use of a projected substitute, which is now defined in the new article as “a player who does not immediately participate in the game.”

“There has been some confusion among both officials and coaches about substitution procedure,” said Theresia Wynns, NFHS director of sports and officials education and liaison to the Softball Rules Committee. “Therefore, the committee felt it was necessary to clear up that process and provide coaches and officials with a standard definition of a projected substitute.”

The following Points of Emphasis were approved by the Softball Rules Committee:

- 1. STRIKE ZONE (FP)**
- 2. DP/FLEX EDUCATION**
- 3. PITCHING (FP)**

According to the NFHS Athletics Participation Survey, baseball is the fourth-most popular sport for boys at the high school level with 482,629 participants in 15,789 schools. Fast-pitch softball is the fifth-most popular sport for girls with 364,297 participants in 15,225 schools during the 2013-14 season.

This press release was written by Brandon Jones, a summer intern in the NFHS Publications and Communications Department and a junior at Indiana University Bloomington.

###

About the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)

The NFHS, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the national leadership organization for high school sports and performing arts activities. Since 1920, the NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and performing arts activities that help students succeed in their lives. The NFHS sets direction for the future by building awareness and support, improving the participation experience, establishing consistent standards and rules for competition, and helping those who oversee high school sports and activities. The NFHS writes playing rules for 16 sports for boys and girls at the high school level. Through its 50 member state associations and the District of Columbia, the NFHS reaches more than 19,000 high schools and 11 million participants in high school activity programs, including more than 7.7 million in high school sports. As the recognized national authority on interscholastic activity programs, the NFHS conducts national meetings; sanctions interstate events; offers online publications and services for high school coaches and officials; sponsors professional organizations for high school coaches, officials, speech and debate coaches, and music adjudicators; serves as the national source for interscholastic coach training; and serves as a national information resource of interscholastic athletics and activities. For more information, visit the NFHS website at www.nfhs.org.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Bruce Howard, 317-972-6900
Director of Publications and Communications
National Federation of State High School Associations
bhoward@nfhs.org

Chris Boone, 317-972-6900
Assistant Director of Publications and Communications
National Federation of State High School Associations
cboone@nfhs.org