



2018 NFHS Softball Rules Changes, Interpretations

2-65-2, 8-1-1c, 8-4-3a, 9-6-2: The coach, pitcher or catcher of the defensive team may request an intentional walk either before or during the pitch count.

Rationale: This change to allow intentional walks was enacted to align fast pitch and slow pitch rules, to keep up with current trends of the sport, and also to maximize the flow of the game.

3-2-7c: Language was added to address the use and placement of the wristband playbook/play card and defines this item as a piece of equipment. It also addresses restrictions on color.

Rationale: The wristband playbook/playcards are worn on the forearm and considered equipment, not a garment. Therefore, these items are not required to adhere to the color restrictions addressed in 3-2-7c.

3-2-15, 10-2-3a: This change removes the responsibility of the umpires to inspect equipment prior to the start of the game. Rule 4-1-2d already requires head coaches to verify that their players are legally and properly equipped.

Rationale: The responsibility to verify that players are legally equipped rests with the coach and administration of the school. Rules 7-4-2 and 10-2-3l provide the authority to umpires to penalize for equipment violations.

3-7-1 NOTE, 6-2-5 NOTE 2: Added language provides umpires with the authority to allow a reasonable number of warm-up pitches to an incoming pitcher due to circumstances that require a pitcher to be removed by rule.

Rationale: Currently there are no guidelines for warming up the incoming pitcher under these circumstances. The default number of pitches used by the umpires is 5 unless there is inclement weather. The note will give guidance to all parties involved.

6-1-2b: The pitcher may now step back with the non-pivot foot at any time prior to the start of the pitch.

Rationale: This is a change to assist the developing pitcher.

Major Editorial Changes

3-6-12, 10-1-6: Language provides clarity and consistency for restriction of alcohol and tobacco use by participants and officials.

8-1-2: This change requires the batter to make an attempt to avoid being hit by a pitched ball in the area between the plate and the batter's box. This portion of the rule had been inadvertently omitted.

Points of Emphasis

1. Coaches responsibility to verify players are legally equipped including all bats and helmets used in the game.
2. Rules associated with when batter must attempt to avoid being hit by a pitch.
3. Courtesy runner for the pitcher and/or catcher.



2018 NFHS SOFTBALL RULES INTERPRETATIONS

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RULES BOOK CORRECTIONS:

2-65-2: Intentional Walk (Base on balls) – A request made to the umpire by the defensive coach, pitcher or catcher, for the purpose of awarding the batter first base. ~~No pitches are thrown.~~ The request may be made prior to or during the at bat.

CASE BOOK CORRECTIONS:

8.1.1 SITUATION G J: R1 is on third. R1 starts home as in a squeeze play. F3, who is playing close for a bunt, cuts off the pitch and tags R1. **RULING:** This is treated the same as catcher obstruction. The ball becomes dead at the end of playing action. The coach or captain of the team at bat has the option of the play or penalty. If the penalty is accepted, R1 is awarded home and B2 is awarded first. (2-36, 8-1-1 d); **9.1.1 SITUATION D:** With two outs and R1, R2 and R3 on base, B6 receives ball four. R3 touches second and is then tagged off base for the third out before R1 has reached home base. **RULING:** ~~The run scores; R1 was awarded home as soon as ball four was declared. Although the batter is awarded first base, all other runners are entitled to advance one base without liability to be put out. Once R2 passed third base she is now liable to be put out. If this happens for the third out of the inning prior to R1 touching home, R1's run would not count.~~ (2-63, 2-65-1, 8-1-1c, 8-4-3a, 9-1-1). **NOTE:** this is the same ruling as Case Book 8-1-1 SITUATION F on page 50.

SITUATION 1: R1 is on second base. A ground ball is hit to F6, who makes an errant throw to F3, who cannot make the catch. The ball goes to the fence where F9 is in position to back up the play and quickly retrieves the ball. B2 sees that the ball is overthrown and attempts to turn the corner to head to

second base, and is obstructed by F3 who is attempting to retrieve the ball. The umpire signals and verbalizes obstruction. B2 realizes she cannot reach second base and returns safely to first base. R1 advances to third base. The ball is thrown back to F1, who is not in the circle. The base coach now tells B2 to break for second base due to the obstruction call. B2 runs toward second base, and the pitcher runs over and tags her half way between the bases. R1 remains on third base. **RULING:** The umpire returns B2 to first base as there was no subsequent play on a different runner. (2-36, 8-4-3b EXCEPTION 1) **COMMENT:** The umpire judged that B1 was obstructed between first base and second base. B1 has not satisfied an exception in Rule 8-4-3 and, therefore, cannot be put out between the two bases where she was obstructed.

SITUATION 2: R1 is on second base. A ground ball is hit to F6, who makes an errant throw to F3, who cannot make catch. The ball goes to the fence where F9 is in position to back up the play and quickly retrieves the ball. B2 sees that the ball is overthrown and attempts to turn the corner to head to second base and is obstructed by F3 between first base and second base. The umpire signals and verbalizes obstruction. B2 realizes she cannot reach second base and returns safely to first base. R1 attempts to advance to third base and F9 throws to third base to make a play on R1. Seeing the throw to third base, B2 attempts to advance to second base and is thrown out on a close play at second base. **RULING:** The out on B2 would stand. (2-36, 8-4-3b EXCEPTION 1) **COMMENT:** Since B2 had returned to the base she would have reached and there was then a play on a different runner, she can now be called

out between the two bases where she was obstructed.

SITUATION 3: Runners are at first base and second base with no outs. There is a short pop-up to the infield. Neither umpire calls the infield fly rule. The infielder drops the ball (not intentionally), then picks up the ball and throws to third base. The base umpire calls R1 out on a force (no tag). The ball is then thrown to second base to force R2 (no tag). The base umpire calls R2 out on the force. The batter-runner is safe at first base. The defensive coach comes out before the next pitch and questions why an infield fly was not ruled. The plate umpire calls the batter out. The offensive coach comes out before the next pitch and states that once an infield fly is ruled, there is no longer a force on R1 and R2. Since the runners were not tagged, they should not be called out. **RULING:** The batter is out due to the infield fly being ruled, both runners are safe and stay on second base and third base since there was no tag. (2-30, 8-2-9 NOTE)

SITUATION 4: R1 is at second base, R2 is at first base and there are two outs. B3 hits a home run over the fence. R2 stops to tie her shoe, and B3 passes her and then stops. The base umpire calls B3 out for passing another runner (a) before R1 crossed home plate or (b) after R1 crossed home plate. **RULING:** In (a) no runs are scored because the third out occurred prior to R1 crossing the plate and (b) R1 scores because she crossed home plate before B1 was called out. (2-49, 8-6-4, 9-1-1)

SITUATION 5: There is a two-ball, one-strike count on the batter. The next pitch is called a strike. Now the umpire calls two balls and two strikes.

The catcher throws the ball back to the pitcher in the 16-foot circle, but the batter goes to her dugout thinking it was strike three. The plate umpire calls her out for leaving home plate and entering the dugout. **RULING:** Incorrect procedure. (2-5-2, 8-1-1, 8-2-4) **COMMENT:** Rule 8-2-4 specifies that the batter-runner is called out if she fails to advance to first base and enters the dugout/bench area. However, the batter does not become a batter-runner until she has completed her turn at bat (2-5-2, 8-1-1). In this case, the batter would be brought back to the plate to complete her turn at bat with a two-ball, two-strike count.

SITUATION 6: There are two outs with R1 at first base. B2 hits a single to left field. F7 throws the ball to F5, who, along with F3, runs to the pitcher's plate to calm F1 down. F5 hands the ball to F1 who has the ball in her hand as she is talking to her teammates. The third base coach tells R1 to run to third base as there is no defensive player at third. She runs to third base and the plate umpire calls her out. **RULING:** Correct ruling. Provided F1 has control of the ball within the circle, the look-back rule is in effect. Also, the batter-runner would have to have reached first base – or been ruled out – for the look-back rule to be in effect. If F5 has control of the ball in the circle, the look-back rule is NOT in effect. **COMMENT:** In order for the look-back rule to be in effect, the pitcher must have the ball in her possession and be within the 16-foot circle, and the batter-runner must have reached first base or have been declared out before the rule is in effect. (8-7-1)

SITUATION 7: It is the top of third inning and the catcher (F2) requests that

B7 be intentionally walked. As B7 is on her way to first base, the defensive coach comes out and says that she does not want B7 to receive an intentional base on balls. **RULING:** Once a request from the pitcher, catcher or defensive coach is honored by the umpire, the intentional walk has occurred and cannot be removed. (2-65-2, 8-1-1c)

SITUATION 8: The visiting coach verbalizes 3-2-4 and the batter looks at her playcard on her wrist. The visiting team uniforms are red and blue with red upper undergarments. In a), prior to the pitch the defensive coach questions the umpire about their playcard being black, and asks if it must match the uniform/upper undergarment color. In b), prior to the pitch the defensive coach questions the umpire about their playcard being red/blue and the umpire says it is legal as it is considered equipment. In c), the visiting coach verbalizes green 3-2-4 and the batter looks at her black playcard equipped with a clear window showing a multi-colored list of plays on her wrist. Prior to the pitch the defensive coach questions the umpire about whether their playcard is illegal since the multi-colored list of plays is visible and not the same color as the rest of the sleeve. **RULING:** In a), these playcards are legal, and the only restriction is that the playcard be a solid color and not optic yellow. In b), incorrect ruling. These playcards are illegal, as playcards must be a single solid color and not optic yellow. In c), these playcards are legal. The only restriction is the color of the sleeve; there is no restriction on the color of the list of plays contained within the playcard. (3-2-7c EXCEPTION)

SITUATION 9: In the pregame meeting, both coaches verify their teams

are legally and properly equipped according to NFHS rules. In the third inning, the visiting coach comes out of the dugout and says that a bat being used by a home team player is on the USA Softball non-approved bat list with ASA Certification marks. **RULING:** Once the umpire verifies that the coach is correct, the player is out and the player and head coach are ejected. The bat is removed from the game. (1-5-1d, 3-5-1, 3-6-1, 7-4-2 PENALTY)

SITUATION 10: In the fourth inning the defensive coach requests and – against the advice of the umpire – receives his fourth charged defensive conference. His replacement pitcher has a) not pitched previously in the game, b) has pitched earlier in this inning, c) has pitched previously in the game. How many warm-up pitches will each pitcher receive? **RULING:** In a), the umpire has the authority to grant additional warm-up pitches when a pitcher is replaced by rule and the incoming pitcher has not previously pitched in this game. In b), a pitcher returning to pitch in the same half-inning will not be granted any warm-up pitches. In c), a pitcher having previously pitched in the game, but not in that half-inning, will receive five warm-up pitches. (3-7-1 NOTE, 6-2-5 NOTE 2)

SITUATION 11: F1 places her hands together, then steps back as a part of her motion to pitch. As she stops her movement backward, her hands separate and she steps forward as she delivers the pitch. **RULING:** Legal, as long as the step backward begins prior to the start of the pitch (when the hands are separated). (6-1-2b)