

Oregon School Activities Association

Baseball SRI Bulletin – #1

February 18, 2016

The NFHS Baseball Rules Committee has approved four points of emphasis for the 2016 season: unsportsmanlike acts, post-game infractions, home run celebrations, and catcher's equipment.

Unsportsmanlike Acts

The NFHS has taken another opportunity to remind all umpires that "the basic premise for education-based athletics is education." The umpires are expected to work collaboratively with the coaches and administrators in an effort to foster sportsmanship, promote positivity, and arbitrate fairly the game event. Because we, as umpires, are the only unbiased participants, it is incumbent upon us to "maintain order and control."

The NFHS is emphasizing the use of preventative officiating in 2016. Please work with your local colleagues and association trainers to develop a framework for handling difficult situations that relies on prevention, rather than penalization. Remember, in accordance with the verbiage published by the NFHS for the upcoming season, "Unless the situation calls for such a drastic response, ejections **should not be** your first reaction."

Post-game Infractions

Once umpires have left the field, they are no longer in charge of the contest and cannot eject participants. However that does not give players, coaches, or fans the right to act out toward umpires. Umpires are expected to report all post-game infractions to their commissioner who should report them to the OSAA. If the infraction can be deemed to be within the "confines of the field" (i.e. on the pathway leaving the stadium), umpires will have the full support of their local commissioners and the OSAA in issuing post-game ejections.

Home Run Celebrations

This point of emphasis notes the increase in taunting, bench jockeying and unsporting behavior during these celebrations, and addresses how umpires must deal with these important sportsmanship issues. Rule 3-3-1f covers unsporting behavior and the penalties for it. There are a lot of things that go on during a game that really are not a part of the game of baseball. Umpire AWARENESS of what is going on is necessary for keeping order on the diamond. Good game management skills include keeping a close eye on player behavior. A player who just hit a home might decide to make a taunting gesture directed towards the opposing team's dugout while rounding the bases. Taunting invariably leads to retaliation, and penalizing a retaliatory act is always more difficult than penalizing the initial act of bad sportsmanship. Taunting needs

to be dealt with immediately. As a rule, players guilty of taunting should be penalized either by official warning or an ejection. There is no place for such activity in high school athletics. If the umpire chooses only to warn, then any subsequent violations would result in immediate ejection. Your local commissioner and the OSAA will always support ejections related to taunting. If you believe the offense to be major, there is no requirement to issue a verbal or written warning prior to ejecting a player who is taunting the opposing team.

Bench jockeying can also be considered taunting when the actions of the bench are directed specifically at the opponents and are intended to humiliate or demean the other side. We encourage a warning to be given for bench jockeying, but a single warning is sufficient. Do not deal with these important sportsmanship issues simply by meting out continuous warnings, while largely ignoring the escalating problem.

Catcher's Equipment

There have been reports of umpires allowing catchers to wear a two-piece-style mask (a.k.a. the skullcap helmet and mask). We remind umpires that rule 1-5-4 requires that all catchers' helmet and mask combination shall meet the NOCSAE standard. Any helmet or helmet and mask combination must have full ear protection with dual ear flaps. A throat protector is also mandatory, although it can be attached to the mask or can be part of the mask. This point of emphasis is a player safety issue, and must be strictly enforced.

Tad's Tip...

It is the plate umpire's responsibility to make sure all warnings are properly documented. The plate umpire should always write down the inning, outs, person at bat, nature of warning and to whom the warning was given.

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