

Oregon School Activities Association

Baseball SRI Bulletin – #3

WEATHER CONCERNS

Unfortunately we have had a very wet start to the 2017 baseball season. I am guessing less than half the scheduled games around the state have been played, with surely more rain forthcoming. Difficult weather brings difficult umpiring decisions.

I want to review some specifics regarding thunder and lightning, rain, and judgments associated with pitcher's dealing with slippery mounds and runners slogging through standing water on the base paths. Every field is different. From all grass to full turf, in every game the weather can play an unpredictable role in our decision to start the game, continue the game, or halt the game. There are a few things we must **always** consider in making these decisions.

- Lightning Standards
 - a) Recognition. When thunder is heard, or a cloud-to-ground lightning bolt is seen, the thunderstorm is close enough to strike your location. **SUSPEND PLAY** and take shelter **IMMEDIATELY**.
 - b) Thirty-minute rule. Once play has been suspended, wait at least thirty minutes after the last thunder is heard or lightning bolt is witnessed prior to resuming play.
 - c) Any subsequent lightning or thunder after the beginning of the 30 minute count should reset the clock and another 30 minute count should begin.

- Student Athlete Safety

I am confident in our ability to make judgments involving player safety. This has to be our number one concern. Rain, darkness and playing conditions are all issues directly related to keeping the kids safe.

- a) Rain. There is no concrete rain rule. Using all of the tools available, including weather radar, coaches' knowledge of local weather patterns, and our own experience in determining if field conditions are safe enough to start, you must make the difficult decision whether to continue or suspend play. Coaches and umpires must work as a team to make these tough decisions. Ultimately the crew must make the final decision.
- b) Turf. Just because you are playing on a turf field, **DO NOT** play through a down pour, and/or poor playing conditions. All turf fields are different and not all are entirely turf. We still have dirt mounds and grass outfields that will be obvious areas of concern when evaluating playing conditions. 95% of the field might be in fine shape, but if one section of the outfield remains unplayable, you may be unable to play the contest. Although turf has advantages, slipping on turf is no different than slipping on grass-you can still get injured. Umpires should never be expected to play through heavy rainfall because the "turf drains really well."
- c) Darkness. Another difficult situation that must be pre-gamed with your partner and discussed with the coaches when dealing with non-lighted fields. There is no hard and fast rule for darkness, but working together with your partner to insure the game can be played safely in low light is a point of emphasis.

Remembering to always err on the side of student athlete safety will make these tough calls easier.

Be safe out there. See you at the yard.

Tad Cockerill, #541-408-6735

OSAA State Baseball Rules Interpreter