

SRI BULLETIN #5 – APRIL 9, 2012

PLUGGED BALL IN THE OUTFIELD

Fellow umpires,

Unfortunately, from a baseball perspective, we have had a very, very wet start to the season. I would imagine that less than half of the scheduled games around the state have been played, and more rain will surely be forthcoming. Difficult umpiring decisions are part and parcel of difficult weather.

I am trusting that we have all reviewed the very specific regulations regarding thunder and/or lightning and I am confident in our ability to make judgments regarding the safety of pitchers dealing with slippery mounds and runners slogging through standing water on the base paths.

But what about batted balls that plug in a wet outfield? Are we discussing this possibility at the pregame meeting? Are we calling time and awarding two bases when this happens? Are we telling the fielders to gouge the ball out at any cost and play on? Should we even be playing the game if the outfield is so wet that balls become largely submerged below the surface?

To be clear, there is no specific NFHS rule regarding plugged balls. In fact, there is no rule about this possibility at any level of baseball. I would suggest that if this occurrence is a distinct possibility, the field should probably be ruled unplayable. With that said, we all understand that teams are often willing to play in less than ideal conditions, especially if it has rained all week. We should also consider the instance where 95% of the field is in fine shape, but one section of the outfield remains particularly damp, and balls can become plugged, and maybe have done so before.

If a batted ball plugs in the outfield and the fielder properly raises his hands before making **multiple** attempts to play the ball, the umpire's then shall call time. The batter shall be awarded **one** base if the ball is in *front* of the outfielder making the play on the ball. The batter shall be awarded **two** bases if the ball becomes plugged *behind* the outfielder. If the outfielder makes an attempt to play the ball, play remains live.

It would be appropriate to discuss this state ruling at the pregame conference, if applicable, so that there is no confusion if such a situation arises.

Thank you,

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