



2014 NFHS BASEBALL RULES INTERPRETATIONS

Publisher's Note: The National Federation of State High School Associations is the only source of official high school interpretations. They do not set aside nor modify any rule. They are made and published by the NFHS in response to situations presented.

Robert B. Gardner, Publisher, NFHS Publications © 2014

SITUATION 1: With the bases empty, the batter's backswing causes his bat to contact the catcher, thereby dislodging the baseball from the catcher. **RULING:** Since there was no play that could be made, there is no interference. Play will continue. (7-3-5c)

SITUATION 2: With the runner from third attempting to steal home, the batter swings and misses and his backswing contacts the catcher, causing him to drop the ball. The action occurs with a) one out or b) two outs. **RULING:** This is backswing interference. In a), the runner from third is out; in b), the batter is out. (7-3-5c Penalty)

SITUATION 3: R1 on first base gets a great jump on the pitcher's move and is sliding into second base when B2 swings and misses the pitch for strike three. B2's follow-through strikes the catcher. **RULING:** B2 is declared out for his interference and R1 is returned to first base. (7-3-5c Penalty)

SITUATION 4: R1 on first base attempts to steal second base and is about halfway to second when B2 swings and misses the pitch for strike three. B2's follow-through strikes the catcher causing him to drop the baseball. **RULING:** B2 is guilty of interference. Since the pitch was a third strike and B2's interference prevented a possible double play, both B2 and R1 are declared out. (7-3-5c Penalty)

SITUATION 5: The pitcher places his pivot foot on the pitching plate with the toe of the pivot foot in front of a line through the front edge of the plate and the heel of his pivot foot behind the back edge. His non-pivot

foot is in front of the line extending through the front edge of the pitching plate. The pitcher attempted to pick-off the runner at second base. **RULING:** This is an illegal pitching position. When the pitcher moved in his pick-off attempt, he made an illegal pitch and a balk would be enforced. (6-1-2 Penalty)

SITUATION 6: The pitcher places his entire pivot foot on top of and parallel to the pitching plate. No part of his pivot foot is on or in front of the front edge of the pitching plate. His entire non-pivot foot is in a line with the pivot foot, on top of the pitching plate with no part of the non-pivot on or in front of the line of the front edge of the pitching plate. **RULING:** While this appears to be an unusual and a non-functional pitching stance, it is a legal wind-up position. (6-1-2)

SITUATION 7: The pitcher places his non-pivot foot on top of the pitching plate at a 45-degree angle with one-third of his pivot foot in front of the front edge of the pitching plate and the heel of his pivot foot behind the back edge of the pitching plate. His non-pivot foot is entirely in front of the front edge of the pitching plate. Without making any other movement, the pitcher places his pivot foot entirely behind the pitching plate. **RULING:** The pitcher initially assumed an illegal pitching position. Since he made no other movement, he is allowed to step back off of the pitching plate with his pivot foot and correct his illegal position. (6-1-2, 3)

SITUATION 8: The head coach appears at the game dressed in sweatpants and a sweatshirt. This combina-

tion is not an approved team uniform for a coach by the state association. **RULING:** The coach is restricted to the dugout for the balance of the game. He may coach his team from the dugout and provide instruction to his players. (3-2-1)

SITUATION 9: The home plate umpire, while positioned to make a call on a runner attempting to score, is hit by the ball in the mouth. His uniform shirt and pants become soaked with blood. **RULING:** The NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee re-affirmed that if blood is on an umpire's uniform, he will need to have it cleaned with the proper solution by a trainer, or change his uniform/ gear. If he is unable to do so and he does not have spare clothing, and his partner does not have any gear or uniform pieces that will fit, it is permissible to wear what is needed to be able to finish the game. (3-1-6)

SITUATION 10: With runners on third and first, the pitcher legally steps and feints to third and then legally turns and picks off the runner at first base. **RULING:** Provided all the aspects of the pick-off moves are legal, the out will stand. The "31" move is legal in high school baseball. (6-2-4)

SITUATION 11: As the head coach moves to the pitching mound for a defensive conference, he tosses a baseball to his third baseman and has him take warm-up throws with another player to get ready to pitch. **RULING:** A team cannot have a fielder, in the game, throw a baseball for the purpose of warming up as a pitcher, during a defensive conference or a

pitching change. If a team desires to warm up a player in the game to prepare him to pitch, it would need to take him out of the game to warm up and then later re-enter him under the substitution rule. (3-4-1)

SITUATION 12: The visiting team has developed an orchestrated team action to cheer on a teammate to get a rally going. The action consists of a rhythmic series of hand claps and foot stomps. **RULING:** As long as the action is within the spirit of fair play, and not intended to induce a balk, create a distraction for the opposing team or intimidate/demean them, this action is acceptable. There have been some instances where a team, for example, begins to pound bats in the dugout only when the opposing pitcher begins to deliver a pitch. That action is clearly intended to gain an advantage and is not to be allowed. (3-3-1)

SITUATION 13: The home team has scheduled a game against Team A followed by a game against Team B. During the first game, a soft mist fell and the plate umpire believes he has the responsibility to determine if the field conditions are suitable for the second game. **RULING:** While the home team has scheduled two games on the same day, this should not be considered a doubleheader (two games between the same teams during the same day). The home coach has the responsibility to determine whether the grounds and other conditions are suitable for starting the game against Team B. (4-1-1)

SITUATION 14: In the fifth inning, the starting pitcher is removed for the first time in the game and goes to the bench. In the seventh inning, the original starting pitcher is re-entered to face the last batter. The opposing coach argues that the player cannot return to pitch, saying "once removed, he cannot come back to pitch." **RULING:** If a starting pitcher was removed to the bench, he may return to pitch in a game provided a) he has re-entry eligibility; b) he faced the first batter of the game, or faced the first batter as a relief pitcher until that batter was on base or out or the third out of the inning occurred; c) his departure was not due to a violation of the defensive charged conference rule (fourth defensive conference in a seven-inning game); and d) his relief

did not take more than eight warm-up throws. If those conditions are met, a pitcher may return to the mound. If a pitcher is removed and goes to another defensive position, he may be removed and return to pitch once an inning, provided the above requirements are met. (3-1-2, 3; 3-4-1 Penalty)

SITUATION 15: One of the players for the visiting team has beads in his hair. The home coach complains to the plate umpire that this is jewelry and the player may not participate in the game. **RULING:** Hair styles are as varied as players. One is not preferred over another with regard to baseball rules. A player with cornrows is as compliant as one with a flattop. Beads that are in the cornrows are considered to be a "hair adornment," not jewelry. High school baseball rules have not concerned themselves with players' hair styles or adornment. The beads are legal and the player may participate. (1-5-12)

SITUATION 16: Following a home run, the catcher picks up the bat, shakes it and hands it to the home plate umpire stating that the bat rattles. The home plate umpire verifies that the bat does rattle. The defensive coach wants the bat declared to be illegal and the appropriate penalties imposed. **RULING:** Per Rule 1-3-2a-3, "Each legal wood, aluminum or composite bat shall be free of rattles, dents, burrs, cracks and sharp edges." A bat that has a rattle is an illegal bat. A player who uses one is subject to Rule 7-4-1 and his head coach will be subject to Rule 4-1-3b. The batter would be out and the head coach restricted/ejected. If the plate umpire did not notice the bat having a rattle prior to the at-bat, it should be assumed that the bat became illegal during the contact with the pitch and should not impose the penalties. The home run will count and the bat will be removed from further use in the game. (1-3-2-2a-3; 4-1-3b; 7-4-1)

SITUATION 17: The starting pitcher comes to the mound to take his warm-up throws to start the game. He is wearing a compression sleeve only on his throwing arm. The opposing coach demands that the sleeve be taken off before the pitcher may pitch. **RULING:** A pitcher may wear a compression or medical sleeve on one or both arms that is any color, including

one that is white or gray, provided it does not extend below the elbow. A doctor's signed permission slip is not required. If the pitcher wears a sleeve that extends below the elbow, it can be worn on either arm, provided it is not white or gray or have white/gray on it. It also cannot be of a color or color combination that would be deemed distracting by the plate umpire. (1-4-2; 6-2-1i)

SITUATION 18: B1 hits a home with an illegal bat. The bat was left not far from the plate area. B2 has taken his position in the batter's box and has received the first pitch for a ball. The plate umpire, noticing the bat used in the home run, walks over to get it back to the respective team's dugout. When he picks it up, he notices it is one of the bats that has been decertified by the NFHS. **RULING:** Since a pitch has been thrown to the next batter, B1's home run stands. B1's head coach, however, is still restricted to the dugout for his use of the illegal bat. (7-4-1a; 4-1-3b Penalty)

SITUATION 19: F7 makes a diving catch. As he slides over the line designating dead-ball territory, his feet remain in live-ball territory. Is the ball dead? **RULING:** The ball remains live and in play. F7 must be entirely in dead-ball territory before the ball shall be declared dead. As long as any part of F7's body is touching the designated dead-ball line, the ball remains live. (5-1-1i)

SITUATION 20: In the second inning, the field umpire ejects the first baseman of Team A from the game for objecting to a call. In the seventh inning, one of Team A's players is injured, leaving it with only eight eligible players. The coach of Team A appeals to both umpires to allow his team's ejected player to re-enter. **RULING:** The player may not be allowed to re-enter the game. An ejection is not retractable. (10-1-6)

SITUATION 21: As the home team prepares to take the field on defense, F2 pulls on his one-piece catcher's mask/helmet as he sets up in the catcher's box. Both the offensive team and umpire-in-chief notice that the catcher's mask/helmet is one of the new ACME shiny-chrome, reflective-paint models. **RULING:** The umpire-in-chief instructs F2 to put on a compliant catcher's mask/helmet, the

outer cover of which shall have a non-glare surface. F2 explains that there is no other mask available; however, adding dull/matte black tape over the helmet would make the helmet less reflective, which would meet the criteria of the rule. There would be no penalty unless F2 does not comply with the umpire's direction, then he would be ejected from the contest. (1-5-5)

SITUATION 22: R1 leads off the inning wearing a highly polished reflective batting helmet. The opposing coach inquires as to the legality of R1 wearing such a helmet as it would be distracting to his pitcher and the infielders. R1 and his coach explain that, a) the helmet meets the current NOCSAE performance standard for batting helmets; b) there is no rule prohibiting such product for use; and c) the player has a right to own and use the helmet when there is no rule preventing such use. **RULING:** The umpire explains that the use of such helmet presents a risk minimization issue for the team playing defense. The bright reflection of the sun off the helmet poses a dangerous situation for the defense. In a) and b), the fact that the helmet meets the NOCSAE performance standard for batting helmets is admirable and is compliant to NOCSAE standards; unfortunately, it is judged by the umpire to be unreasonably dangerous and is illegal for use. There are several rules references prohibiting the use of such equipment. (1-5-9,10) Regarding c), the player does have the right to own and use the helmet, just not for high school baseball competition. **COMMENT:** If the offensive team would like to use the batting helmet, it could make it less reflective by adding dull/matte black tape over the helmet in order to meet the intent of the rule.