

2019 Baseball Rule Changes

1. **Rule 1-3-1** - NOCSEA Stamp on Baseballs
To maintain a consistent and uniformed standard for high school competition, every baseball manufactured should meet the same level of quality and playability. However, due to the number of baseballs that some high schools may have in their inventory, the implementation date has been moved back to accommodate that surplus. The effective date will be with the 2020 season.
2. **Rule 1-5-3** – NOCSAE Stamp on Catcher’s Chest Protectors
The NOCSAE mark will be required on all body/chest protectors that meet the NOCSAE standard starting with the 2020 season.
3. **Rule 6-1-3** - Pitcher pivot foot in set position
This rule change eliminates the requirement for the entire foot to be in contact with the pitcher’s plate. Many pitching mounds are constructed such that it is problematic for a pitcher to have his entire pivot foot in contact with the pitcher’s plate. No advantage is gained by having some of his pivot foot not in contact with the pitcher’s plate.

2019 Baseball Points of Emphasis

The NFHS Baseball Rules Committee and the NFHS Board of Directors believes there are areas of the game of interscholastic baseball that need to be addressed and given special attention. These areas of concern are often cyclical, some areas need more attention than others, and that is why they might appear in the rules book for consecutive editions. These concerns are identified as “Points of Emphasis.” For the 2019 high school baseball season, attention is being called to: Sportsmanship, Compliance of Player’s Equipment, and Baserunner’s Responsibilities. When a topic is included in the Points of Emphasis, these topics are important enough to reinforce throughout the academic year because they are not being given the proper attention.

Sportsmanship

National Anthem Standoff

The standing and singing of the national anthem are a valued tradition that is held prior to sporting events. Staring down an opponent after the national anthem, trying to intimidate them, or refusing to leave the respective baseline before the other team departs is not consistent with the mission of education-based athletics. Coaches are the closest role models to these students and are held accountable for the behavior of their players as they represent their school and community. If those actions are not representative of high school sports and what they stand for, then corrective measures should take place.

Bench Jockeying, Celebrations and Negative Comments Between Opponents

Coaches, players, substitutes, attendants, or other bench personnel shall not leave the dugout during live ball for any unauthorized purpose. Coaches or team personnel may not sit outside the dugout/bench on buckets or stools. Players are not allowed to stand or kneel outside their dugout/bench and make “cat-calls” or any other disparaging remarks while the other team is taking infield practice. Rooting for your team is an integral part of high school baseball. However, making disparaging remarks toward your opponent does not improve the game; in

fact, it detracts from the contest. The purpose of interscholastic sports is educational. Chants/intentional distractions/loud noises (natural or artificial) directed at the opponent's pitcher prior to his pitching, or the batter getting ready to hit, or a fielder getting ready to make a play is not good sportsmanship. We should strive to have our young people play to the best of their ability and let their natural talent be the barometer of their success.

This is unsportsmanlike behavior and shall not be tolerated in interscholastic baseball. Umpires and coaches need to work together for the benefit of the students they officiate and teach. It is these game situations that provide coaches and umpires excellent "teachable moments" to reinforce proper behavior and perspective. The positive value that are learned at the baseball diamond will serve the young people long after their high school careers have ended.

Enforcement of NFHS Jewelry Rule

Items that are attached except medical appliances/devices are considered to be jewelry. The primary cause for the restriction of jewelry is primary for risk minimization for the wearer and for the opponent. Earrings and various other piercings can be problematic for a player if the piercing gets caught on equipment and torn away from the body. Obviously, if a physician has provided documentation in support of a piercing, the local state association has the latitude (with proper justification) to make a special accommodation for the player. We need to be more vigilant to protect our players and their opponents.

Compliance of Player's Equipment

In preparation of the new equipment that will have the NOCSAE stamp being introduced into high school baseball, it is appropriate to begin to have those discussions with players, coaches, umpires, and parents. The NOCSAE stamped baseball will be available for use during the 2019 high school baseball season. The transition will be easier when all the baseballs have both the NFHS Authenticating Mark and NOCSAE seal effective January 1, 2020, but in the interim, balls that have the NFHS Authenticating Mark are permissible for use this season.

It is critical that coaches understand their responsibility regarding being knowledgeable about the equipment that their players possess and use for game competition. The NOCSAE standard for body/chest protectors is an important piece of equipment that is designed to protect the heart and cardiac cavity and reduce the risk of commotio cordis. All high school catchers will have to have new body/chest protectors beginning January 1, 2020. When a coach is asked to verify that his players are properly equipped in accordance with NFHS rules, he/she shall also verify that the participants are using only legal equipment, including bats that are unaltered from the manufacturer's original design, production, and meet the provisions of Rule 1-3-2 and helmets that meet the provisions of Rule 1-5-1 and are free of cracks and damage.

Baserunners' Responsibilities

The baserunner is arguably one of the most important roles in baseball. Without him/her there can be no scoring. However, the baserunner has tremendous responsibilities. Beside Definitions, Baserunning is the second largest rule in the NFHS Rule Book. The Baseball Rules Committee wants to emphasize that the advancing baserunner must touch the bases in the correct order (including awarded bases), he/she should not miss any base or leave a base too early, but if that occurs, he/she must return to touch the base immediately. In addition, the committee wants to point out that if the baserunner runs more than three feet away from a direct line between bases to avoid a tag or to hinder the defensive player, he/she will be declared out. They must

slide in a direct line between the bases. When he/she elects to slide (by rule he/she does not have to slide) it must be legal. The baserunner cannot cause illegal contact and/or illegally after the actions of the defensive player in the immediate act of making a play or on a force play. Jumping, hurdling, and leaping are all legal attempts to avoid the fielder if the fielder is lying on the ground. Diving over a fielder is illegal. Attention to the intricacies of base running will enhance better rule knowledge and compliance, elevate fair play, and promote risk minimization.

2019 MPA Baseball Bulletin

1. Thunder & Lightning - Minimum of 30 min between last site or sound.
 - Plate umpire will chart last site/sound
 - Pitchers will be given ample warmup time but may not warm up on game mound.
2. Ten Run Rule
 - At the varsity level, games will be terminated at 4 1/2 innings or 5 innings depending on who is ahead by ten runs during the regular season; however, coaches have the option to waive the ten-run rule by mutual consent during the pre-game meeting.
 - At the J.V. or 9th grade level the rule which terminates a game is extended to 5 1/2 innings and coaches may not waive the rule
 - Ten run rule is in effect for all playoff games.
3. Pitch Count
 - Official book (home team) determines official pitch count.
 - If a balk or illegal pitch occurs the plate umpire shall announce to both coaches that the pitch does not count to the pitch totals.
4. Equipment
 - Helmets must be used during all warmups including warming up pitchers on and off the field.
 - Hockey style mask does not need an attached throat protector, regular mask does.
5. Ejections
 - Adults must leave site/sound of field, athletes must remain on the benches.
6. Game Balls & Catcher's Chest Protectors:
 - NOCSAE seal must be on all balls and catcher's chest protector starting with the 2020 season.

2019 NFHS Baseball Situations

SITUATION 1: The pitcher, in his delivery motion, comes off the pitching plate and replants his pivot foot in the dirt in front of the pitching plate prior to releasing the ball. His coach says this "crow hop" is legal. **RULING:** This is an illegal pitch. The pitcher cannot replant his pivot foot during the delivery. (6-1-1, 6-1-2, 6-1-3)

SITUATION 2: The batter comes to bat wearing a helmet with a "jaw and cheek protector" attached to the helmet. His coach states that the combination is legal while the opposing coach

maintains that the helmet is now illegal and cannot be worn. **RULING:** With all the possible combinations of products on the market, it is not feasible for an individual umpire to know what is legal and what is not. It is the responsibility of the head coach to know if helmets with the “jaw and cheek protector” attached are compliant. (2-10-2, 4-1-3b)

SITUATION 3: Before the game, the plate umpire is provided three baseballs that have the NFHS Authenticating Mark but not the SEI/NOCSAE certification mark. **RULING:** For the 2019 season, these baseballs are compliant. Effective January 1, 2020, both the SEI/NOCSAE and the NFHS Authenticating Mark will be required on all baseballs used in high school competition. (1-5-3)

SITUATION 4: The batter hits a hard one-hop ground ball back to the pitcher. The pitcher makes a great stab on the ball, gloving it in the webbing of the glove. With the batter-runner fast approaching first base, the pitcher is unable to quickly pull the ball out of the glove’s webbing. The pitcher takes a few fast steps toward first base and takes his glove, with the ball in the webbing, and shovels it to the first baseman who catches the glove with the ball prior to the arrival of the batter- runner. **RULING:** The batter-runner is out. The first baseman had secure possession of the ball and glove before the batter-runner touched first base. (2- 9-1, CB 2.9.1 SITUATION D)

SITUATION 5: The pitcher assumes the set position with his non-pivot foot entirely in front of the front edge of the pitching plate, and the pivot foot parallel to the pitching plate, but with only the toe of his pivot foot in contact with the pitching plate. **RULING:** This is legal. The entire pivot foot no longer needs to be touching the pitching plate. If some part of the pivot foot is in contact with or directly in front of the pitcher’s plate and is parallel to it, it is a legal set position. (6-1-3)

SITUATION 6: The pitcher is in the set position with the heel of the pivot foot in contact with the pitcher’s plate and the rest of the pivot foot is (a) on an angle toward home plate, or (b) parallel to the pitcher’s plate. **RULING:** Only part of the pivot foot is required to be touching the pitcher’s plate with the pivot foot being parallel to the pitcher’s plate. The position in (a) is illegal, and in (b) legal. (6-1-3)

SITUATION 7: R1 is off with the pitch, which the batter hits high and deep down the first-base foul line. As the ball is caught at the fence, R1 has missed second base and is standing on third

when the ball goes dead on an overthrow. R1 retreats to first base and touches second base as he returns. **RULING:** Had the ball not been dead, R1's retreat would have been legal and his touching of second on his return would satisfy his baserunning requirements under the principle of "last time by." However, since R1 was on third base (the succeeding base from the missed second base) when the ball became dead, he cannot return to second base and/or first base. If the defense legally appeals his missing second base on his advance, he would be declared out. (8-2-5, 8-2-6l)

SITUATION 8: The visiting team arrives at the field and the umpires notice that, while each jersey has a number on its back that is at least 8 inches high, the numbers are not a "plain Arabic style." **RULING:** The game is to be played. While the style of the numbers are not exactly what is required, they are legible. If the state association desires, the umpires may make a game report. (1-4-3)

SITUATION 9: A thrown ball accidentally hits a photographer who is walking from outside the media area to the dugout. Should interference be called? **RULING:** Unless the photographer intentionally moved so that he was hit by the thrown ball, it is not interference and the ball remains in play. The photographer shall be instructed to remain in the media area during live-ball play. If the photographer intentionally interfered with the thrown ball, the ball is dead, and penalties shall be handled as if it was spectator interference. (1-2-8, 5-1-11, 8-3-3e)

SITUATION 10: The home team has a uniform with the team motto embroidered at the top of the back of the jersey. The motto is not offensive or unsportsmanlike in nature. **RULING:** This is not legal. If there are no other jerseys or shirts available for the team to use, the game is still to be played and a report shall be made to the state association office. (1-4-3)

SITUATION 11: No outs and no runners on base when the batter swings and misses strike three that is in the dirt. As the batter-runner takes off for first, the catcher moves to pick up the ball and throw it to the first baseman. Meanwhile, the plate umpire has also moved to see the resulting action better and inadvertently interferes with the catcher's throw, which sails to the outfield. The batter-runner advances to second base. **RULING:** It is only umpire interference if the act is specifically identified as umpire interference in the rules. By rule, it is umpire interference when a plate umpire hinders, impedes or prevents a catcher's throw attempting to prevent a stolen base or retire a runner on a pickoff play. Any other occasion where an umpire hinders a play is to be considered incidental contact. The intent of the rule for umpire interference by a plate umpire is

to prevent the possibility of interference where a catcher is trying to throw immediately after a pitch, and the umpire must be in position to see that pitch, and there is contact. In this play, it is incidental contact and the result of the play shall stand. (2-21-2, 8-3-6)

SITUATION 12: The batter enters the batter's box with a bat that has a bat knob sensor embedded in the knob of the bat. **RULING:** Sensor technology embedded in the bat is legal for practice but is illegal for competition. Therefore, the bat is an illegal bat. The ball is dead, the batter is declared out and the head coach is restricted to the bench for the remainder of the game. (4-1-3b PENALTY, 5-1-1c, 7-4-1a)

SITUATION 13: With one out and a runner on first base, the defense brings in a substitute pitcher. After one pitch to the batter, the pitcher successfully picks off the runner at first base. The coach now wants to make another pitching change. **RULING:** The home plate umpire will not allow this pitching change. The substitute pitcher must pitch to the batter then at bat, or any substitute for that batter, until such batter is out or reaches first base, or until a third out has been made. (3-1-2)

SITUATION 14: A sharp line drive is hit to the second baseman. The impact of the ball takes the glove off the second baseman's hand, and the glove lands on the ground with the ball still in the pocket of the glove. The second baseman retrieves the glove and takes the ball out of the pocket. Is this a catch or must the ball be thrown to first base to record the out? **RULING:** This is not a catch. To record the out on the batter-runner, the second baseman would need to throw the ball to first to obtain the force out. A catch is an act of a fielder gaining secure possession in his hand or glove of a live ball in flight and firmly holding it. (2-9-1)

SITUATION 15: S1 comes in as a relief pitcher. As he takes his warm-up pitches, the opposing coach argues that he has now exceeded the maximum number of pitches a pitcher is allowed by the state association restrictions. **RULING:** Since S1 never threw a pitch, he has not exceeded his state association restrictions. The defensive team can replace him with an eligible relief pitcher. (6-1-6)

SITUATION 16: R2, on second base, rounds third and runs into F5 as he attempts to field a foul fly ball. This action occurred with (a) a count of 1-1; (b) a count of 1-2; or (c) two outs. **RULING:** In all three instances, R2 is out for his interference. In (a), the batter returns to bat with a count of 1-2 and in (b), the batter returns to bat with a count of 1-2 as the pitch is treated

as a foul for the batter's count. In (c), the batter will lead off in his team's next offensive half-inning. (7-4-1f)

SITUATION 17: The visiting team is wearing "quarterback-style" wristbands that have defensive plays listed under a Velcro flap. The pitcher is wearing a black wristband down near his fielding glove. The home coach claims that the wristbands are illegal, and all players must take them off. **RULING:** Provided the wristbands are not dangerous, they are legal. If the plate umpire judges the wristband worn by the pitcher to be distracting, he would need to remove it. Otherwise, it is legal for the pitcher as well. (1-5-9, 6-2-1f PENALTY)

SITUATION 18: The head coach requests "Time" and goes to the mound for a visit. He removes F1 and brings in S1 to pitch from the bullpen. The coach remains at the mound talking with S1 as he takes his eight warmup throws. The opposing head coach claims that this is a charged conference because the defensive coach stayed at the mound until S1 had completed his warm-up throws. **RULING:** There is no charged conference to be recorded against the team on defense since F1 was removed as the pitcher. If the head coach leaves when S1 completes his warm-up throws and does not delay the game, no defensive conference will be charged. (3-4-1)

SITUATION 19: 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, who is in the game, throw a baseball for the purpose of warming up as a pitcher during a defensive conference or a pitching change. If the 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 20: With the bases loaded and the runner on third base breaking for home, the batter swings at a pitch, hitting it high in the air between the pitching mound and home plate. As the plate umpire declares "Infield fly if fair," the ball lands on the ground and rolls back toward home. As the runner from third is sliding to the plate, the ball contacts him in fair ground. **RULING:** The ball is immediately declared dead. The batter is out for the infield fly and the runner is out as well. (2-19, 5-1-1-f1, 8-4-2-k2)