

2009 Softball Rules Changes Address Pitchers, Batters

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Mary Struckhoff

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (July 1, 2008) - Beginning in 2009, new rules will be in place to create more balance between pitching and batting in high school softball.

Three rules revisions were made by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Softball Rules Committee regarding the pitcher-batter relationship at its annual meeting June 9-11 in Indianapolis. The rules changes subsequently were approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

The penalty for Rule 6-2-3 - a pitcher exceeding the 20-second time limit - is now a ball awarded to the batter, rescinding the previous penalty of an illegal pitch.

"The change makes a violation of the time to pitch by the pitcher consistent with a batter failing to be ready within 10 seconds after the ball has been returned to the pitcher," said Mary Struckhoff, NFHS assistant director and liaison to the Softball Rules Committee. "An illegal pitch penalty is excessive as it also awards runners one additional base."

A revision to Rule 6-1-4d changes the pitching windup requirement to a maximum of 1½ clockwise revolutions. The change will benefit batters and umpires alike.

"More and more, pitchers are pushing the rule to the limit in an attempt to gain an advantage by deceiving the batter," Struckhoff said. "The change will make an illegal pitch, as it relates to the windup, easier to identify and enforcement more consistent."

The final adjustment to help create balance between offense and defense clarifies the definition of an attempted bunt. Rule 2-8-2 will be changed to state that holding the bat in the strike zone is considered an attempted bunt. In order to take a pitch, the batter must withdraw the bat backward away from the ball.

The committee also addressed the issue of ball specifications. Beginning in 2010, all softballs must have a dynamic stiffness that does not exceed 7,500 lbs/inch when tested under current proposed ASTM test methods. Rule 1-3-3 adds the dynamic stiffness requirement to complement the existing size, weight, COR, and compression standards.

Editorial changes approved by the committee:

- Rule 1-4-2 includes the allowance of one American flag (2 inches x 3 inches maximum) permitted on the glove.
- Rule 1-7-1 states that any eye shield worn by a catcher must be clear.
- A note addition to Rule 3-2-1 establishes that individual state associations may permit a player to participate while wearing a different style of uniform for religious reasons.
- Rule 3-2-7 was clarified to affirm that exposed undergarments must be a solid color.
- Rule 6-2-3 clarifies that once the ball is returned to the pitcher to prepare for the next pitch, she has 20 seconds to release the pitch.
- Rule 7-3-1 clarifies that the batter has 10 seconds to take her position in the batter's box after the ball is returned to the pitcher. The wording of the penalty for this rule was also changed to state that the pitcher bringing her hands together indicates a commitment to deliver the pitch.

The committee also established three points of emphasis for next season:

- 1) pitching, 2) obstruction/interference and 3) the DP/FLEX Rule.

Softball is the fourth-most popular sport among girls at the high school level with 373,448 participants during the 2006-07 season, according to the High School Athletics Participation Survey conducted by the NFHS. It also ranks

third in school sponsorship for girls across the nation with 14,968 participating schools.

This press release was written by Steve Appelhans, a summer intern in the NFHS publications/communications department and a senior at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, majoring in sport management.