Our first softball bulletin arrives a bit later this year as we have sent preseason information covering topics like our Mechanics Clinics series in other formats both electronic and paper. Our bulletins will come to umpires directly again this year from the OHSAA office which will make it easier on our secretaries and interpreters who will no longer have to relay the information to you. This will be more efficient and allow for more timely distribution with everyone receiving the information at the same time.

Speaking of our Mechanics Clinics for 2019 – I’m very pleased to report that our clinics this year were very successful with attendance tripling when compared to last year. This increase is very gratifying as we had an opportunity to work with more umpires wanting to improve their mechanics and at the same time were able to identify many umpires ready to advance in their careers. There’s no doubt that many factors contributed to this huge increase – among those the tournament points awarded to attendees as well as the larger number of clinics offered with more convenient locations and options offered for our umpires. Thanks to all who attended and special thanks to those we heard from following these programs, for example from a veteran umpire who has had some trips to the state tournament – “I hate to admit it, but other than the three umpire system clinic you hold in early May, this was the first clinic I ever attended in my 25 years of umpiring. So, at times I felt a bit like an old dog learning new tricks. I wish I had attended or there were such training available very early in my career..... I am a convert to the importance of mechanics, but that is very difficult to teach and be understood by simply reading a book.”

State Meeting Deadline – The last day on which an online rules meeting may be viewed without penalty will be Friday, March 22. The meeting will be accessible with a $50 late fee until Monday, April 22. To access the meeting, log in to your myOHSAA profile and click the “Rules Meetings” icon in the top right, then click “Find a State Meeting” from the left side menu, then select “Softball” from the “Sports” dropdown menu, “Official” from “Meeting Type” dropdown menu, and then click “Search”. This search will display the online meeting option as well as any face-to-face meeting options. You may view the online meeting on any device except for a Google Chromebook. A Google Chromebook is a type of laptop computer, entirely different
from the popular internet browser Google Chrome. You may view the online meetings using the internet browser Google Chrome.

- Remember that a minimum of four local meetings are required. If you have questions, contact your local secretary. Don’t delay – time is running short.

- Last week the OHSAA office issued contracts for the 2018 Regional Tournament games. We’re pleased that we will continue with an important change to the assigning process again this year. Each four umpire crew assigned to work a state game will also be assigned as a four umpire crew for a regional game as well. This allows that crew to work two weeks in a row as a crew of four with the umpires working the same positions each week. While twelve regional games will be worked by four umpire crews the remaining regional games will be worked by crews of three. This means that we will have 156 (versus 144 prior to 2017) umpires working regional games.

- Hold the date - we will again offer a pre-tournament clinic covering the three umpire system, as well as other topics, on Sunday, May 5 at Reynoldsburg HS Livingston Campus. This free clinic is intended for umpires working the three umpire system in postseason play but is open to all OHSAA umpires. No preregistration is needed. Registration will be at noon with the clinic running from 12:30-4PM.

- One of our most frequent questions - Where can I find the USA Softball Non-Approved Bat List? Umpires do need to carry this item as a reference in case of a question - go to this link - www.teamusa.org/usa-softball~/link.aspx?_id=015F4358A30B44368FC142350D112FFF&_z=z
  There are a number of bat lists located there – scroll down for the list of non-approved bats.

- Each year we have some items to clean up following our various pre-season meetings and clinics – these are good review items for association meetings:
  1. Play - The pitcher steps on the pitching plate (a) with her hands together OR (b) steps on with the hands apart but brings them together without first simulating taking a signal. Ruling – Illegal Pitch - A delayed dead ball would occur immediately. Question - May she avoid the illegal pitch by stepping off the pitching plate? Answer - No, if she steps off after doing either of these items the umpire would call time and add a ball to the count.
  2. Question - May a glove contain some optic yellow markings? Answer – Perhaps, Rule 1-4-1 states the glove may not be entirely optic yellow in color and also may not include an optic colored marking that gives the appearance of the ball. Beyond that, it could include some optic yellow color as long as it is not judged to be distracting by the umpire.
  3. Question from a school – To help our pitcher we would like to include pitching lane lines showing the twenty-four inch width in our field markings. May we do this? Answer – No, field markings should be consistent from site to site and game to game. The required markings are found in Rule 1-1 and the related figures on pages 8 & 9 of the rule book. Normally we are very happy when we have all proper field markings but additional markings can’t be added.
  4. Play – B3 is due up but B4 is in the on deck circle. The defense requests that the umpire award an intentional walk. The umpire calls time and does so. B4 starts to first base but before reaching first base the offense notices the error and sends B3 on to first base. Can the defense appeal batting out of order while B4 is on the way to first base? Ruling – No, under Rule 2-1-3-b-1 a dead ball appeal may only be made after the ball is dead and all runners have completed their advancement. Likewise, an appeal for a missing first base on a home run can’t be made
until all the runners have completed running the bases. Note – The likelihood of this happening on an intentional walk is a stretch. This ruling very covers a very unusual scenario and would not apply to a situation where any pitches are thrown on any walk.

5. Play - B1 hits an illegal pitch for a double. She misses 1B and is called out on appeal. Since she did not reach 1B safely is the illegal pitch nullified or is there an option? Ruling – The illegal pitch is nullified and B1 is out. When a batter is able to hit an illegal pitch and safely reach first base (in this situation advance to second), it is not considered to have given the defense an unfair advantage, so rule 6-1-1 EXCEPTION 1 addresses this situation and cancels that illegal pitch. The nrules state that once a runner has passed a base they are assumed to have touched that base until properly appealed. In accordance with the intent of the illegal pitch EXCEPTION the offense was not put at a disadvantage in this case since the batter was able to safely obtain first base therefore the illegal pitch should be cancelled and no option given to the offense.

NOTE – This ruling is different than one provided at the Interpreters Meeting and supersedes the previous interpretation.

6. This slide and statement may have caused some confusion in the state meeting, especially the online version. It was taken from a play situation provided by the Federation and although it might be confusing the information on the slide is correct. The umpire, in this play, incorrectly called an illegal pitch as explained. It’s reprinted here for your convenience and review: 

**RULING:** Incorrect. Any step backward must begin prior to the start of the pitch, which is when the hands separate after they have been brought together. (6-1-2a,b)

7. Correction to OHSAA Illegal Pitch Powerpoint 2019 – Thanks to Steve Badertscher and the Marion Umpires for catching this error. This powerpoint was part of the CD distributed to local association rules interpreters. The following bullet points are incorrect -

- Pitch starts when – one hand off ball or motion that is part of windup after hands come together

- A step backwards must begin before hands come together

These three bullet points in the next slide are correct as a result of the editorial clarification to Rule 6-1-2 a& b.

- The pitch starts when the pitcher’s hands separate after they have come together while the pivot foot is on or partially on top of the pitcher’s plate.

- Any step backward with the non-pivot foot must begin before the start of the pitch.

- Once the hands separate the pitcher may only take not more than one step which must be forward and at the same time as the delivery.