Our second softball bulletin opens with some important reminders. Please make sure you meet the necessary timelines. Also, as a reminder, our bulletins will come to umpires directly 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.

State Meeting Deadline – The last day on which an online rules meeting may be viewed without penalty will be Thursday, 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.

Optional Testing Deadline – March 25 - Building on the success of the 2018 optional postseason points test, we are offering the option again in 2019. The test is totally voluntary, but taking the exam provides the opportunity to earn extra points on your composite postseason score for 2020. New this year, the test is being sent to all umpires so that everyone has a chance to improve on their knowledge. The additional points for the postseason composite score will apply to eligible Class 1 umpires. You will need to access the exam at the following link: http://exams.nfhs.org Your username and password is your OHSAA permit number. Your first attempt counts for the bonus points, so take your time. We hope all of you will participate in this opportunity. Also a score of 80 is required for 2020 state tournament eligibility.

94-100% - 3 points
Save 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.

Everyone owns the rules! One important takeaway from our 2019 State Meetings was that every umpire on the field is responsible for the proper playing rule application during a contest. With this in mind we need to know that we must stop the game if we determine that our partner has misapplied a playing rule. This is different from when we disagree with a partner’s judgment call. Along these lines the next bullet point is a great question:

Is the rule book taken to the field or left in your car at the game site? What we are insisting on is that the rule book must be available. It can be in the car if that is “close enough”. What we can't accept is that the book was in the car and too far to go! If the car is too far the book must be at the field. We've had unfortunate situations where the umpires disagreed on a rule and did not refer to the book. Can we all agree that this type of disagreement is reason to look it up?

Here are some plays and questions that have been submitted this spring:

1. **Play** - Team A is using the DP/FLEX. In the first inning Team A takes the field and the FLEX player is not playing on defense. The DP is playing defense. The second inning is played the same way. The FLEX is not on the field playing on defense. If the FLEX player played defense in the third inning would she need to use her re-entry to do so? **Ruling** - This is a good opportunity to reinforce the use of the new Appendix H in the NFHS Rules (page 95). Items #2 states the flex can never be on offense only and Item # 8 states that she is out of the game when she is no longer playing defense. When she returns it is her one and only re-entry (Item #5). It will take some time but we will get everyone used to the value of this resource. It’s a good idea to copy it and carry it in the lineup card holder.

2. **Question** – I noted the POE concerning the “best practice” for a coach to include his/her name on the lineup card. What happens if the coach fails to do so? **Answer** - There is no penalty. This is a best practice. Of course the umpires know who the head coach is because s/he must appear for the pregame conference to certify that everyone is legally equipped. **My suggestion is that the umpire check the lineup cards and if the name is not there the card can be returned to the coach which a request to re-check it for accuracy and to add the name of the coach.**

3. **Play** - A pitcher is on the rubber, hands apart, taking a signal, and then flipping the ball from hand to glove without bringing the hands together. She then brings the hands together and goes into her pitching motion. Is this a violation? **Ruling** - Tossing the ball hand to glove, back
and forth is not a violation of any rule. The issue is when the hands come together more than once (Double Touch).

4. Question - Our association is going to use the dual credit BB/SB meeting to discuss mechanics differences between baseball and softball. Why are there differences? Answer – These differences exist because of the differences in the games. Take initial position of the base umpire as an example – in softball the umpire must be outside the diamond to see when the runners leave the base versus the release of the pitch and to be out of the way of a crowded infield. There are countless differences and reasons along with many similarities. Note –  
Associations are required to use the OHSAA provided program for these dual credit meetings. This program covers the things that need to be reviewed with both baseball and softball umpires. Associations that use other programs for this meeting will find that the attendance credit for both sports may be removed and that the association will not be permitted to hold dual credit meetings in the future. The OHSAA may at its discretion impose additional penalties on the association and its leadership.

5. Play - The offensive coach asks the umpire to examine the left fielder’s mitt claiming that it has three colors making it illegal. Upon inspection it is found that the main part of the mitt is gray with blue in the inner part of the mitt. There is also red piping, red lacing and the manufacturers’ logo is also red. RULING: The mitt is legal as it is two colors, gray and blue. Piping is viewed the same as lacing and can be any color other than the color of the ball. The manufacturers’ logo is allowed to be any color. (1-4-1a)

6. With no outs, a 1-1 count and R1 on first base, the pitcher is called for an illegal pitch. B2 swings and misses. R1 was stealing on the pitch is thrown out at second base. RULING: Since the batter was not safe at first base and all runners did not advance at least one base on an illegal pitch the offensive coach receives a choice of the play or penalty (6-1-1 PENALTY EXCEPTION 2). In this case the result of the play would be B2 at bat with a 1-2 count and R1 out. If the coach would like to take the penalty, a ball is awarded to B2 (2-1 count) and R1 would be returned to first base. NOTE: This is an example of a play where the umpire must carefully explain the options to the coach. The choice is obvious and we don’t want the coach to misunderstand the choices. If they do make the wrong choice we’ll likely later here that “the umpire explained it wrong.” Do the right thing and help to get the coach to the proper decision. Take your time explaining all options and make sure you are doing so clearly. Be prepared to also explain to the defense’s coach what has transpired and why.

7. Play - During a game a bat is brought to the umpire that does not have the 2000 or 2004 ASA certification mark but does have another organization’s marking. The offensive coach claims that since it has been approved by an organization it is acceptable to be used in NFHS play. The umpire rules this bat is a non-approved bat and penalizes accordingly. RULING: This is the correct ruling. For NFHS play bats must have either the 2000 or 2004 ASA certification mark. (1-5-1d) Shown below for reference.