• Reminder – Our annual clinic for tournament umpires will be Sunday, May 6 from Noon until 4PM in the Columbus area. We are currently working to finalize a site and will provide that information in an upcoming bulletin.

• Everyone owns the rules! One important takeaway from our 2018 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 mis-applied 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 that was sent to me from the Central Ohio area:

• 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 to check so we did not count a run that by rule should have counted! If the car is too far the book must be at the field. Last year, we 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?

• There are no changes to Rule 8-10 which covers the double first base. **Remember that the double base is required for all OHSAA contests – grades 7 through 12.** It has been an OHSAA Point of Emphasis for the last three years. If a school does not have the double base – play the game and immediately report to the OHSAA by going to your dashboard on myohsaa, selecting “Submit New Game Report”, and completing the report using “Equipment” as the report topic. **PLAY THE GAME – UMPIRES WILL NOT BE PENALIZED FOR PLAYING THE GAME BUT ARE SUBJECT TO PENALTY IF THEY FAIL TO FILE REQUIRED REPORTS.** If there are extenuating circumstances such as “our new base is arriving air freight later today” FILE THE REPORT AND INCLUDE THE EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES.

• 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.

- Here are a number of other plays and questions that have been submitted:

1. The batter (a) bunts the ball or (b) swings and misses on a third strike not caught by the catcher with the ball rolling out in front of the plate. As the batter moves to run to first base and the catcher goes after the ball the two collide. What is the call? Ruling – In both cases this is going to be interference on the batter-runner who will be ruled out, the ball will be dead and all runners will return. The rule is NFHS Rule 8-2-7 and Item B is also further clarified in NFHS Case Book play 8-2-7D. This is a rule that may not seem fair to everyone as the defense may have put the ball out there but the rule is clear.

2. From Columbus we have a play that very likely started in an umpire’s mind but could easily come up with a coach or player also having a good imagination. Let’s remember that NFHS has an awarded intentional base on balls this year. The request may be made by the coach, pitcher, or catcher. When the umpire makes this award the ball is dead. Play – R1 on first base attempts to steal on a 1-1 pitch. The catcher makes a bad throw which goes into center field. As the runner starts to continue to third base the catcher requests an awarded intentional base on balls. Ruling – The umpire shall not grant the request until the play is completed. The ball will remain alive and when all play is completed the umpire will call time and award the batter first base. This would be handled just as if the catcher requested time – wait until the play is over and then grant the request. This play illustrates that there are times that the umpire must clearly call time when making this base award. At other times there may be nothing happening when the request is granted with the umpire directing the batter to go to first base and as a result the ball is immediately dead when this award is made. This is covered in Rule 8-4-3a and there is a nice Case Book play in 8-4-3D: With R1 on second base, no outs and a 3 ball, 1 strike count on B2, the catcher informs the plate umpire that they wish to intentionally walk B2. As B2 is walking to first base, R1 advances toward third base. F1, seeing R1 advancing, throws the ball to F5 who tags R1 prior to reaching third base. RULING: R1 should be placed back on second base since the ball is dead on an intentional walk and runners may not advance unless forced. (8-1-1c EFFECT, 8-4-3a EFFECT).

3. Question – We have a school in our area where the head coach, who also coaches third base, has a service dog who accompanies him in the coaches’ box. Is this permitted? Ruling – This school would need to request permission from the state office. This is covered in Rule 3-2-13 Note which authorizes state associations to allow exceptions to NFHS playing rules when participants have special needs or extenuating circumstances. Obviously, the OHSAA is best equipped to handle these requests and without documentation of such permission this accommodation shall not be permitted.

4. Question – Rule 3-2-7c Exception was added this year permitting a wristband with a playbook/playcard to be worn provided it is a single, solid color and not optic yellow. Since this item is considered to be equipment it does not have to match the color of the team’s upper exposed garments. The pitcher must wear her wristband on the non-pitching hand. Does the playcard have to be one color and match the color of the wristband. Ruling – No, the playcard
can be a different color and will likely also always be at least two colors. In order for items to be printed on the card there must be at least two colors.

5. Question - If a team has an illegal bat and equipment the book says the coach is ejected. In the preseason guide it states the coach is either restricted to the dugout or ejected. Which is the correct penalty? Answer - You are right. The reference in the PSG does not give enough information to be helpful. The penalty for most violations of equipment rules (Much of Rule 1 and all of Rule 3-2) is a warning for first offense with bench restrictions for offender and coach on second offense (Rule 3-6-1). In addition the equipment must be removed or made legal. The more severe penalty applies to violations of Rule 7-4-2 – Altered or Non-approved Bat, which includes an ejection of the batter and head coach when an altered or non-approved bat is brought into the batter's box. Note that the penalty for an illegal bat would be a dead ball with the batter out and runners not retired being returned. In addition, the penalty for an illegal bat would also include the penalty prescribed in 3-6-1.

6. Question – If a pitcher uses a resin bag must she allow her opponent to use it? Ruling - Each pitcher is permitted to bring her own rosin bag and is not required to let the other pitcher use it. We don't have the rule existing in some other codes that requires it’s removal each half inning.

7. Related Question – May the pitcher carry a towel to dry her hands when there is inclement weather? Ruling - When weather dictates an umpire could permit the pitcher to carry a towel however it must be kept in such a place that it is not visible to the batter when the ball is pitched. It may be kept inside a pocket or behind the pitcher's back in such a place that it can't be seen at the plate. It can't be left on the ground.

8. Play – The batter hits the ball into the outfield for an extra base hit. As she rounds first base she is obstructed by F3. The umpire determines that she was delayed by a distance of ten feet. She is thrown out at second base by (a) five feet or (b) fifteen feet. Ruling – Under Rule 8-4-3b obstruction is a delayed dead ball however the ball becomes dead when the obstructed runner is retired prior to reaching the base that would have been reached without obstruction. Also, an obstructed runner may not be called out between the two bases where the obstruction occurred. The obstructed runner is awarded the base which would have been reached had there been no obstruction. Therefore, the ball is dead and in (a) the runner is awarded second base and in (b) the runner is awarded first base.

9. Related Play – Same play as above however the runner is thrown out at third base by (a) five feet or (b) fifteen feet. Ruling – In (a) the runner is awarded third base as she would have reached third base without the obstruction. In (b) the runner is out as she was retired while no longer between the bases where the obstruction occurred. In both of the above plays the umpire must determine which base the runner would have most likely reached had there been no obstruction. This is what makes our job fun!

10. Question - Where can I find the USA Softball Non-Approved Bat List? Answer - Go to this link: http://www.teamusa.org/usa-softball/play-usa-softball/certified-usa-softball-equipment Then click on bats in the dropdown box and go to the bottom of the next page for the lists. It’s important to carry this item when on the field. See item #5 above.