• The OHSAA will be holding its annual clinic for softball postseason umpires on Sunday, May 6. This year’s meeting will be at: REYNOLDSBURG HIGH SCHOOL LIVINGSTON CAMPUS - 6699 E LIVINGSTON AVE - REYNOLDSBURG, OH 43068. Registration will be at 12 Noon with the clinic starting at 1230PM and ending by 4PM. While umpires being invited to this clinic are those working the three and/or four umpire systems in our tournaments, any of our umpires are welcome to attend. There is no charge and no pre-registration is necessary. **Attendance at this clinic is optional.** There is no OHSAA meeting attendance credit. We look forward to our usual good turnout of tournament officials. **Please park in the lot which is behind the school (east end), and enter at Door #23. Note – we will have a brief session at the end of the day to review our simplified four umpire mechanics for those using these in their state and regional games.**

• Congratulations to Mike Burwell, OHSAA umpire from Westerville, who has been selected to represent the United States at this summer’s World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) World Championships Junior Men’s World Championship in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, Canada. Mike is in his ninth year as an OHSAA umpire and is one of five OHSAA umpires who are certified by the WBSC for international competition. Others are Todd Davis, Kim Johnson, Tim Klemm and Jerry Norris. All of these umpires got their start working both OHSAA and USA Softball – and all of them continue to work OHSAA regular season and tournament games. Whether your goal is to work at the Olympic level or be the best you can be at the high school level you should note that each of these umpires started up the ladder by attending every educational opportunity offered to them including both OHSAA training and USA Softball umpire schools. Along those lines we remind everyone that USA Softball will be hosting a weekend school in Cincinnati May 18-20. Details can be found at this link - [http://usasoftballcincinnati.com/2018/01/06/usa-softball-presents-mideast-umpire-school/](http://usasoftballcincinnati.com/2018/01/06/usa-softball-presents-mideast-umpire-school/) Note the early registration discount has been extended to April 21. We’re happy that USA Softball is an education partner of our OHSAA softball umpire program.

• We receive an occasional report of an umpire using a cell phone to take a call on the field. Let’s remember that this should not be our practice. I always enjoy getting on the field and away from the phone – let’s make our calls be our decisions and not our phone calls!

• With the better weather and more games we’ve had many, many questions and plays sent in – here are some of the plays and rulings.
1. A question came up at our local meeting in regards to the age of people in the media area. If a student who may be doing a feed for the schools web page or something like that, do they need to wear a helmet if they are under 18? Ruling - The umpires don't have any jurisdiction over this, nor do the playing rules. So the answer is that it is up to game management or the school program. That said, I strongly discourage media areas – your question illustrates that this may open the school up to a risk management issue for those in media areas and those in the field of play who may enter them.

2. Question from a Coach – I have a question about rule 3-2-7c dealing with wristbands for pitchers. We wore wristbands last year for my pitcher and catcher and they were white and on the non-throwing hand. It was allowed last year without any problem. First scrimmage and I had an umpire tell me he could make her take it off if he wanted to because it was white. Luckily for the scrimmage he didn't. I spoke to a few umpires that do our league games and also have done state tourney games the last few years and they said it hasn't changed and she is okay. I'm asking for clarification since I don't want something to happen in the course of a game. Ruling - Rule 3-2-7c Exception permits this on the non-pitching hand but says it can not be Optic Yellow.

3. Play – In a game yesterday we had a girl hit a home run out of the park. She was congratulated and touched by teammates before reaching home plate. We called here out- is this correct? Ruling – There is no rule that permits an out on this play. Rule 8-6-5 covers assisting a runner during a live ball but that did not happen in this play. Certainly, the umpires can work to keep the teammates back and keep them in the dugout – if this happens repeatedly Rule 3-6-6 could be applied and a warning issued.

4. We had a Junior High School game yesterday and both teams wanted to bat a lineup that included everyone present. Is this permitted? Ruling – No, the NFHS and OHSAA rules are used at all levels of interscholastic sports. As long as the teams are school sponsored there are no unauthorized rules deviations allowed. This includes changes in run rules, a pitching distance of other than 40 feet, batting order and substitution rules, and metal spikes just to name a few.

5. Play - The DP/Flex was being used and the DP got on base her first two times at bat and in each case the Flex ran for her. The second time through the lineup the DP had re-entered to bat while the Flex dropped back to the #10 spot. When the DP/Flex spot came up in the batting order the third time the coach wanted to put in a new DP since the original DP could not re-enter again. We didn't allow this. Ruling – The replacement DP should be permitted. In this case the Flex had never left the game so she can continue to run for both the starting and any replacement DPs as long as the team has enough players to continue to make substitutes in the DP spot.

6. Question - With a runner on 3rd the batter walks. Can the batter-runner continue to second while pitcher is in the circle? Then, if she stops and goes back to first, is she automatically out? Ruling - The key here is that the walk is treated just as a batted ball. A batter-runner who rounds first base toward second base may stop but then must immediately, without stopping, return to first or advance to second. (Rule 8-7-4a) This is all provided ball is in circle with requirements that look back rule is in effect. (Rule 8-7-1)

7. Question - I was the plate official for a game where the catcher called time and left her position and trotted over to the dugout and spoke with her coach for about 30 seconds and then trotted back to her position. The catcher did this twice during the game. The catcher did not enter the dugout and the coach did not enter the field, either time. It dawned on me that maybe I should
be telling the coach that he had used two of his defensive conferences. I did not say anything, as he did not call the player over nor did he enter the field of play, but it seems like there could be a “skirting” of the charged conference rules if this team continued to do this throughout the season. Ruling - The definition of a charged conference is in Rule 2-14-1. A conference is charged when a team requests and is granted time-out for the coach or dugout personnel to meet with personnel in the game. It makes no difference where the conference occurs - this is a conference.

8. At times, it’s been cold during this season – is there a minimum temperature required to play a game? Ruling – There is no such OHSAA rule – you don’t need to carry a thermometer! A few leagues may have an agreement to cancel games if the temperature is below a certain level but that should be communicated to the umpires just as with any other cancellation.

9. Another cold weather issue - Regardless of the unfavorable spring Ohio weather, bat warmers are NOT legal. We've had a report out of the Youngstown area that some schools are using bat warmers. These are not legal and result in an altered bat (Rule 1-5-1c and Rule 2-4-2a). The penalty depends on when this is observed by the umpire. For example, if the umpire arrives at the field and sees the team heating bats, NFHS Rule 3-6-1 applies with removing all those bats from the game and a warning with next violation bench restriction of the offender and head coach. However, if the umpire does not notice this until the batter brings such an item into the batter's box, NFHS Rule 7-4-2 would apply with both the batter and head coach being ejected. This is the same as any other ejection so you are required to file the necessary reports on myohsaa.

10. Are players permitted to wear headbands that are tied in the back? Ruling - The headbands with the knot and tie in the back have now made their way into softball. While not permitted in some other sports, they are permitted in softball. A reminder that bandanas are NOT permitted by NFHS Rule 3-2-5.

11. The following information has been sent to coaches clarifying wristbands. NFHS rule 3-2-7c 'exception' permits the use of a wristband/playcard on the non-pitching hand provided it is a single solid color and simply does not permit it to be Optic Yellow. It is also understood that the playcard itself could be and probably is a different color than the wristband. In other words, a black wristband (permitted) on the non-pitching arm most likely has a playcard that is not black (common sense). It's not possible for the playcard to be a single color – just as any other document the printed matter must be different from the background.

12. Must the double first base be a single piece or can it be two bases together? Ruling - In the Note of Rule 1-2-1 we see that NFHS allows a one or two piece unit. I think it is important to note that both sides must be of equal height which could be an issue to emphasize on the two piece base.

13. Play – I had two runners who violated the look back rule at the same time. Is this a double play? Ruling - Only one may be called out - never a double play. This is covered in the last sentence of the penalty section in Rule 8-7.

14. Another play from a coach and on opening day! - Somehow our line-up got mixed up and our batters ended up batting out of order. The second time through, we caught the mistake and the other team had never appealed. Our number 8 hitter hit in our number 7 hitters spot in the lineup and grounded out for the final out. The next inning, we realized the mistake in the batting order and sent up our number 8 hitter (who just batted the last at bat the inning before) who
was the "proper hitter" in the lineup and was technically up to bat. She ended up getting on base and the other team appealed. The umpire called our next hitter (the number 9 hitter) out and left my number 8 hitter on base and said our leadoff was now up. I appealed this call as the batter was now batting in order and the umpire said that since she hit last at bat she could not hit again and what I should have done was skip her and moved on to my number 9 hitter which would technically have me hitting out of order again. I want to clear up the ruling because I do still believe that the number 8 hitter was legal in hitting in her spot even though she hit the inning before out of order. If she is not legal, I don't see how she was able to stay on first base and call out the number 9 hitter who wasn't up in the order. **Ruling** - Batting out of order is always an appeal play (Rule 2-1-2c). Since there was no appeal the first time through the order or the second time when B7 did not bat and B8 did bat there is no penalty. When B8 made the final out of the inning as an improper batter and there was no appeal by the defense she became a proper batter (Rule 7-1-2 Penalty 3 & 5) and the batting order picks up with the batter following the legalized improper batter which was B8. B9 would lead off the next inning (Rule 7-1-2). When B8 batted again and the defense appealed, B9, who was the proper batter to lead off that inning, was correctly called out. However B8 should have also been removed from base. The inning would have continued with one out, bases empty, and B1 due to bat. (Rule 7-1-2 Penalty 1 & 2). There are also a number of case plays in 7.1.1 and 7.1.2 that track this situation.

15. Another appeals question - What wordage constitutes a proper appeal? After the home run was hit the coach from the defense asked the plate umpire if the batter-runner had touched home plate. Does the use of the word "Appeal" by the individual asking the question need to be used, or does the mere asking of the question imply the appeal request? It was a dead ball because the ball left the field of play, unlike the required tag up situations that occur during play on caught fly balls when nothing is spoken because the play dictates the actions. My initial response was and would be to ask the coach if she wanted to make an appeal. Then procedure could be followed. **Ruling** - Rule 2-1-1 states that an appeal is a play where the umpire does not make a ruling "until requested by a coach or player". I think that we can all agree that the defensive coach was requesting such a ruling. Also, keep in mind that the request need not be verbal. When a player is caught off base after a caught line drive and a throw is made to that base or the runner who "left too soon" is tagged we would make an out call. In this case the appeal/request was made through the action rather than words.

- We've just reviewed fifteen plays and questions – note that in a number of cases the rulings made were contrary to rule. Here are some thoughts from our last bulletin and state meetings – (1) Each umpire 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. (2) We are insisting that umpires have the rule book available for all games. If we need to take the time to look it up we must do so. OHSAA does not recognize protests and as such “we must get it right at the game site.”