Ohio High School Athletic Association

Softball Bulletin

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• Coming soon – we open with a reminder that about our 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.

• What is a home run? Seems like an easy question but some early season plays have come up. Although most definitions are found in Rule 2 this one comes to us in Rule 8-4-3f which says that a home run happens when a fair batted fly ball strikes a foul pole above fence level (how could it not be fair in this case?) **OR leaves the playing field in fair territory without touching the ground or going through the fence.** A couple of plays we have had – the batted ball in flight strikes (1) the top of the fence and goes over the fence or (2) a fielder’s glove and goes over the fence. In each of these cases it is a home run. Unfortunately we had these plays occur two consecutive days earlier this month with the result being a two base award in each case.

• Carelessly throwing the bat! This seems to be a real problem this season. It’s covered in Rule 3-6-3 – remember 3-6 is the important rule that covers bench and field conduct. It has twenty articles or what I like to refer to as the “twenty commandments”. We know most of the violations but must also know the penalty for each. Carelessly throwing a bat is a violation that results in a team warning to the coach. Additional offenses by a member of that team results in a bench restriction to the second and any subsequent offenders. There is no bench restriction of the coach for this. Don’t confuse 3-6-3 with 3-6-16 which covers deliberately throwing bats, helmets or other equipment. This deliberate act would almost always result in the ejection of the offender. Take time to review 3-6 so we match the right penalty to the violation.

• Equipment – Those who also work baseball know that in some cases when a BASEBALL coach certifies that equipment is legal the umpire is not to further question that certification. This ruling was made by NFHS because of one unique situation. However, in softball we do not have that situation and umpires are instructed to be diligent in observing and penalizing equipment violations. Examples would be players wearing jewelry, helmets without face protectors, bats
that are not approved and many more. Violations are penalized under Rule 3-6-1 (the first of the “twenty commandments”) – the first offense is a team warning with the next offense being a bench restriction for both the offender and the head coach. If the violation involves an altered or non-approved bat the batter and head coach are ejected without warning. (Rule 7-4-2).

- Obstruction and a Missed Base – Play - R1 on 2B, ball hit to outfield. Obstruction on F5 as R1 rounds and heads home. R1 beats throw on close play but misses the plate (A) If live ball appeal, do we kill at that point, award HP, and see if R1 has entered dugout and comes back to touch? Then if she retouches on award, run scores? (B) If dead ball appeal, does it matter if R1 has entered dugout without touching? Ruling – This play would be covered by Rule 8-4-3b Penalty a Exception 2 on page 66. This would allow the runner to be put out on appeal provided the obstruction was not what caused the missed base. There are six exceptions to the rule that states an obstructed runner can’t be put out between the two bases where the obstruction took place – all are listed on page 66.

- Question from a coach - The count was 1-2. The batter was hit by the pitch in the arm as she swung at the ball. The ball made contact with the player before hitting the bat. The ball went to foul territory. The umpire ruled the batter out for being hit by a pitch on the third strike because she swung at the pitch and contacting the ball with her arm (even though it went into foul territory). Ruling - Under Rule 7-2-1g a pitch that contacts the batter while swinging is a strike. Just as on any other time the batter is hit by a pitch the ball becomes dead (Rule 5-1-1a). Therefore anything that happens after that is not material as the ball has already become dead. This is a strike no matter if the ball later hits the bat or goes fair or foul. Of course, if it is strike three the batter is out and the ball is always dead.

- Play - Bases loaded, no outs. Batted fair ball passes 3rd baseman and hits runner off 3rd base in fair territory, no other fielder had a chance to make an out. Umpire erroneously calls “Dead ball, runner out”. Offense was put in jeopardy due to incorrect ruling. How should this situation be corrected? Award batter first base and move all runners up since forced? Ruling - When an error is made the toughest part is fixing it. In this case we apply Rule 10-2-3m which requires that we rectify any situation where an umpire’s decision is reversed and puts either team at a disadvantage. This becomes a “new” judgment call as the umpire must decide how to rectify this situation. In many cases your resolution would be correct but you need to make the decision based on what would have happened had the incorrect call not been made. In order to determine this you need to know what happened to the ball after it hit the runner, where it went, etc. The umpire must see all that and make a determination.

- Question - Is a coach allowed to remove his 9th player and play with 8 if it is not due to injury etc. - he just doesn’t want to play her? Ruling - Rules 4-3-1g and 3-3-8 d says that a team must have eight players to continue. There is no requirement that all available players must play.

- Question - If a batter squares to bunt but does not offer at the pitch is it considered a strike. I have believed it would be either a ball or strike depending on the pitch location. Ruling - Rule 2-8-2 states that holding the bat in the strike zone is a bunt attempt. The bat must be withdrawn - pulled backward and away from the ball.

- Question – Must the ball have the OHSAA logo? Ruling - We permit use of any softball that meets NFHS requirements as stated in Rule 1-3. Only the NFHS mark is required. The OHSAA trademark merely indicates that the ball is our official tournament ball and is not required.