The OHSAA will be holding its annual clinic for softball postseason umpires on Sunday, May 7. This year’s meeting will be at: THOMAS WORTHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL - 300 W GRANVILLE RD - WORTHINGTON, 43085-3527. 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 stadium/student parking lot which is between the school (west end), pools, football stadium, and baseball field. We will start our meeting in Room 185 near the southeast corner of the school and later move to the auxiliary gym for the activity portion of the meeting. The auxiliary gym is located near our assigned parking area.**

**Other Tournament News** - We will have some changes this year. First, our regional semifinals will be played as a doubleheader on **Wednesday, May 24** - 2 and 5PM. Finals will be at Noon on **Saturday, May 27**. Second - 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 will allow 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 thirty-six regional games will continue to be worked by crews of three. By the way, this means that we will have 156 (versus 144 in the past) umpires working regional games. This will make it very important that we are all on the same page with both three and four umpire mechanics and we will cover these at our tournament clinic.

**Safety Rules are a priority!** Please take a look at the entire bulletin but pay special attention to the next three bullets that relate to safety issues!

**Weather** – a MUST – we must stop the game for thunder and lightning. It can’t be simpler than that. The school will have a plan to get everyone to the safest place possible. Get to a safe place yourself. We can only return to the field when we have had no thunder or lightning for at least thirty minutes. That is not when we restart the game. That is the earliest that we can return to the field. Don’t take any chances!

**Equipment** - Question from one of our observers - I saw a game where a player passed her bat over the fence to her father who had it in the stands for a few outs. When it came her time to bat again he passed it back over the fence. Ruling – When the bat is returned to the field I
would suggest re-inspecting it and ask the coach why it is being removed. Unless there is good reason the bat should be in the dugout the entire game.

- **Equipment/Jewelry** - Question - Is it permissible for a player to have a medical piercing or a medical earring in her ear if taped or not taped and she has a medical statement from her physician. I’m told that they are put there normally for chronic migraines. Ruling - No - not permitted under Rule 3-2-12. There are exceptions in this rule (medical alert and religious) that allow certain types of jewelry but this is not one of them. We should not be inventing additional exceptions.

- Each season we seem to get questions on many of the same topics but also we always have some new topics. This year one of those new topics has been difference between a bunt and a slap hit. The difference is only important when there is a foul batted ball with two strikes. Under Rule 7-4-9 a batter is out on strikes when she has two strikes and bunts the ball foul with the ball being not caught. If the ball is swung at (not bunted) the ball is foul and the time at bat continues. Under NFHS Rule 2-8-1 a bunt is simply a legally batted ball not swung at but intentionally tapped with the bat. NFHS Rule 2-8-2 adds that an attempted bunt is non-swinging movement intended to tap the ball into play while Rule 2-8-3 tells us that a drag bunt is an attempt to bunt the ball by running forward in the batter’s box as the batter carries the bat with her. The movement of the bat is in conjunction with the batter’s forward body movement and in this case not with the arms. A slap hit is defined in Rule 2-51 and is a batted ball that has been struck with a short chopping motion rather than a full swing. This rule also makes it clear that there is a difference between a bunt and a slap – it states that a slap is “often incorrectly called a ‘slap bunt’”. It’s clear that a slap is a shortened swing and that an attempt to slap that results in a miss is a swing and a strike in every case. This rule goes on to say that the two most common types of slap hits are (a) those in which the batter takes her stance as if to bunt but then either drives the ball into the ground with a quick, short swing or punches it over the infield and (b) those in which the batter takes running steps toward the pitcher before making contact with the pitch. While there are no case plays that address the difference in the slap and the bunt the definitions are actually pretty telling. The bunt is not a swing – it’s an effort to tap the ball slowly in the infield. The batter’s intent is to put the ball in front of an infielder who must come in to field it. Perhaps in some cases a batter could intend to bunt/tap the ball between two infielders who are playing very close to the plate however there can’t be an attempt to drive the ball through or past the infielders. That goes beyond a tap. A batter who slap hits a ball is generally using something less than a full swing but at the same time not trying to place the ball in front of the infielder. The intent of a slap is to put the ball past the infielder(s) – usually over or through the infielders. While she may not always be successful in getting the ball by the infielders it is up to the umpire to read this intent and that is generally a rather easy judgement. Keep in mind that the batter can be moving within the box on either a bunt or slap. Remember the drag bunt is defined by running forward, carrying the bat, and the bat’s movement is in conjunction with the batter’s forward movement – that is the movement of the body, not the arms, and the ball is still being “tapped”. The “slapper” takes running steps forward but strikes the ball with a motion of the arms that is short of a full swing but more than an attempt to simply tap the ball. While the ball may end up in front of the infielder that is not normally the batter’s intent – she is trying to get the ball past at least one infielder. Some umpires consider the position of the batter’s hands on the bat in determining whether a ball is
bunted. Often, on a bunt, the top hand slides up the bat. It’s important to realize that this can be a guideline but also that a ball could still be slapped with a hand sliding up the bat. The bottom line is that we can best judge the difference by: (a) determining if the intent is to tap the ball in front of the infielder or punch it past the infielder and (b) watching the movement of the batter’s arms (not forward movement of the body) to see if she attempts to swing at the pitch (even if a short swing) or simply allow the bat to meet or tap the ball. Note that where the hands are on the bat is not a consideration in this judgement – often a batter will shorten up on the bat to either bunt or slap the ball.

- With the weather we had earlier in the month we received many questions, as well as a few reports of incorrect rulings, concerning interrupted games. Remember that we don’t expect everyone to memorize all the situations that can occur but please know where to go and reference the needed information. This can all be found in both the last four pages of our Pre-Season Guide (all OHSAA information on these four pages) and in the Softball Manual online.

- Play – Runners are on second and third with one out. A ball is caught in flight for the second out and there is an attempt to double up the runner who is off second base. The ball is over thrown and goes in the outfield. The runner on third tags and scores and then the runner on second, who advanced to third, is doubled off on appeal. Does the run count? Ruling - The run counts. This is not a force play (Rule 2-24) but a timing play (Rule 2-63). Unfortunately, in one game umpires got together and while they did not agree they finally decided the run did not score. They obviously did not consult the rule book.

- Comment on the previous play - Most importantly, I have said countless times this winter and spring that umpires must consult the rule book when there is a question about a proper ruling. I have also said that any time the umpires disagree on a playing rule that is adequate evidence of a question. THIS IS A MUST! RULE BOOKS MUST BE AVAILABLE FOR EVERY GAME.

- Play - Runner on third. Third baseman is playing up and close to the line anticipating a bunt. The bunt goes down and on the first base side. The runner bolts for home running in a straight line from third to home (along the foul line) As she is running, she suddenly realizes that she must stutter step and swerve slightly to avoid the third baseman who is not fielding the ball. Runner is thrown out at home. Obstruction is called although it seems harsh as the third baseman is only doing her job and has her back to the runner and can’t see her coming. Is this obstruction? I hope so, I called it. Is the runner entitled to home or should she be returned to third, or is she out? It is debatable whether she would have reached home safely had the obstruction not occurred. Ruling - You are correct. It’s obstruction and the umpire must award the base that would have been reached. That is a judgment call. Although the fielder may have not seen her the runner has the right of way here.

- Play - Runners on first and second. Ground ball hit to the third baseman who fields the ball turns and tags third ahead of the runner by 6 feet or so. The runner on second is forced to run and is obstructed by the shortstop. In the umpire’s judgment she would not have been safe even if she had not been obstructed and is called out. She cannot be returned to second as that base is occupied. However, this seems to go against the rule that a runner cannot be called out between the bases where she has been obstructed. Ruling – This is obstruction and you are going to end up with the bases loaded. That’s simply because we can’t have two runners on the same base.