



NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

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Penalty established for illegal equipment in high school softball

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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INDIANAPOLIS, IN (July 15, 2005) — The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Softball Rules Committee approved a new penalty for non-compliance or illegal equipment at its annual meeting June 18-20 in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Rule 3-5-1 will now require the head coach to attend the pregame conference to verify the team is legally and properly equipped. The first offense will result in the equipment being removed and a team warning being issued. A subsequent offense, by anyone on the team, will result in a dugout/bench restriction for the offender and head coach.

“Coaches should be responsible for their players and equipment,” said Mary Struckhoff, NFHS assistant director and liaison to the NFHS Softball Rules Committee. “By adding a penalty, the committee hopes to make the coach more accountable and take greater steps in ensuring player compliance.”

In other action, the committee approved a new rule to penalize a coach or player for intentionally removing the lines of the batter’s box to gain an advantage for the team’s “slap hitter.” With the implementation of Rule 3-6-19, a strike shall be called on the batter if a member of the offense intentionally removes the line, and a ball awarded to the batter if a member of the defense intentionally erases the line. A team warning will also be issued. Any subsequent infraction will result in the head coach being restricted to the bench/dugout for the remainder of the game.

A strike will now be called when a pitched ball hits the batter and is prevented from entering the strike zone, according to new Rule 7-2-1h. “The offensive team should not benefit with a “ball” or a “no pitch” called when the batter prevents the pitch from entering the strike zone and is hit by the pitch in front of the plate. This rules change helps maintain the balance between offense and defense,” Struckhoff said. “The call will be made at the umpire’s discretion.”

The last major change affects Rule 7-4-1k, which pertains to the bat hitting the ball a second time outside the batter’s box. The committee decided to remove a prior revision and return to the original rule

of calling the batter out if the bat hits the ball a second time on or over fair territory outside the batter's box.

"A lot of these changes were implemented because we felt some issues of the game were contrary to the spirit of fair play," said NFHS Softball Rules Committee Chairman Ralph Swearngin, executive director of the Georgia High School Association. "We're hoping these new penalties will serve as a deterrent and make them stop.

"To have only four rules changes this year is a good thing. It's reassuring to know interscholastic softball is in good shape."

Softball is the fourth-most popular sport for girls at the high school level with 362,468 participants during the 2003-04 season, according to the High School Athletics Participation Survey conducted by the NFHS. It also ranks tied for third in school sponsorship for girls, with 14,181 schools offering the sport.

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