2015 NFHS Baseball Rule Changes

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Batting helmets shall have a non-glare, not mirror-like surface and shall meet the NOCSAE standard at the time of manufacture.
Defective Batting Helmet
Rule 1-5-1, 4-1-3b

Even though this helmet met the NOCSAE standard at the time of manufacture, the crack makes the helmet illegal. The batter must replace the helmet immediately.
Rule 1-5-1

- **ART.1 . . .** It is mandatory for on-deck batters, batters, runners, retired runners, players/students in the coaches boxes as well as non-adult bat/ball shaggers to wear a batting helmet that **has a non-glare (not mirror-like) surface** and meets the NOCSAE standard **at the time of manufacture**.
Rationale: Batting helmets are a key component for minimizing risk in high school baseball. It is critical that the surface of the helmet does not pose any risk for those who are wearing the helmet and for their opponents. It is equally important that the batting helmet not only meet the prescribed NOCSAE standard at the time of manufacture, but that they are monitored regularly for excessive use and kept in good functioning order.
Foul Ball
Rule 2-16-1f

A batted ball that rebounds and hits the batter while he is still legally in the batter’s box shall be called a foul ball.
Foul Ball
Rule 2-16-1f

A batted ball that rebounds and hits the bat while the batter is still holding it while in the batter’s box shall be called a foul ball.
Even though this batter has one foot completely outside the batter’s box, he has one foot still in. Therefore, when the batted ball rebounds and hits him, it shall be called a foul ball.
Rule 2-16-1f and 1g

- **ART. 1 . . .** A foul is a batted ball:
  Sub-articles a-e unchanged.
  
f. that hits the batter in the batter’s box; or
  
g. that hits the ground or home plate and then
  his the batter or the bat which is held by the
  batter, while he is in the batter’s box.

- **Rationale:** Foul balls are often topics that
  yield a tremendous amount of discussions.
  Given the opportunity to identify additional
  foul ball scenarios, it provides more education
  that is helpful to coaches and umpires.
The rule that prohibited using video for coaching purposes during a game has been removed. Therefore, it is legal for a coach or player to use a camera, tablet or phone to record video during a game from the dugout.
Video Equipment in Coaching Box
Rule 3-3-1h

Although it is now legal to use video for coaching purposes during a game, a coach is not permitted to record while in the coaching box. A coach may only have a stopwatch, rule book (hard copy) and scorebook while coaching in the box.
Video Equipment
Rule 3-3-1

Not only may teams record video during the game, but they may also watch it for coaching purposes.
A coach is not permitted to show a play to umpires, as umpires are not allowed to use video equipment during a game. If a coach persists, he can be warned, restricted to the dugout or ejected.
The use of radar guns is permitted.
Rule 3-3-1f

- ART. 1. . . Sub-articles a-e are unchanged.

  f. Use of television monitoring or replay equipment for coaching purposes during the course of the game;

  The rest of the sub-articles will be renumbered.

- **Rationale:** The game of baseball has developed and technology is more affordable and available. Videotaping a game or players’ performances adds to the evolution of the game and enhances the educational ability for a coach to provide real-time instruction.
On his natural follow-through, the batter has made contact with the catcher. The ball is delayed-dead on follow-through interference and if F2 isn’t able to throw out the runner attempting to steal, the runner must be returned to first base and the batter is out.
Before the time of the pitch, if the batter’s practice swing makes contact with the catcher or his equipment, the umpire shall call an immediate dead ball. There is no penalty.
Rule 2-21-4 and 5

- **ART. 4 . . .** Follow-through interference is when the bat hits the catcher after the batter has swung at a pitch and hinders action at home plate or the catcher’s attempt to play on a runner.

- **ART. 5 . . .** Backswing interference is when a batter contacts the catcher or his equipment prior to the time of the pitch.
Rationale: Identifying the various types of offensive interference is pivotal when discussing the role of the batter in that manner. Follow-through and backswing interference are two separate and distinct acts and the penalties reflect their differences.
Rule 7-3-5c

- c. making any other movement, including follow-through interference, which hinders actions at home plate or the catcher’s attempt to play on a runner or...

**Rationale:** After reviewing this rule change from last year, it became evident that the term “backswing” did not accurately capture the infraction, the term “follow-through” was more descriptive.
Rule 7-3-7 and Corresponding Penalty

- ART. 7 . . . Commit backswing interference.

- PENALTY: The ball is immediately dead.

- Rationale: Clarification.
No. 44 is the courtesy runner for the catcher, No. 2. If his team bats around in an inning, No. 2 has not been substituted for and may bat when it is his turn.
If the offense bats around and No. 2 reaches base a second time in the inning, he may run for himself and is not required to be replaced by a courtesy runner.
1. At any time, the team at bat may use courtesy runners for the pitcher and/or the catcher. In the event that the offensive team bats around, the pitcher and/or catcher who had a courtesy runner inserted on their behalf may bat in their normal position in the batting order.

**Rationale:** Clarification when a particular scenario occurs and how that affects the role of courtesy runner for the pitcher and catcher.
Helmet Care

Coaches need to ensure helmets (and all equipment) are in suitable condition for use, particularly when reviewing equipment prior to the start of a season. While this helmet met NOCSAIE standards at the time of manufacture, it is no longer suitable for use.
Helmet Care

Tape is not permitted on a batting helmet, since it could be covering up a crack or defect. Also, it could compromise the ability of the helmet to protect a player.
Helmet Maintenance and Usage

- Reviewing the number of players (and some coaches) who are wearing batting helmets, it becomes clear that a lot of individuals are invested in protecting their head and brain by wearing a batting helmet that meets the NOCSAE performance standard.

- There should be a routine scheduled review and assessment of the condition of the batting helmets established by coaches and school administrators.
Helmet Maintenance and Usage (continued)

- They should also be maintained in a manner that your team can enjoy several seasons of functional use.
- Batting helmet manufacturers normally provide a routine maintenance schedule either with the product or on their company’s website.
A replacement pitcher gets eight warm-up throws. The defensive team shall be ready to resume play upon completion of the eighth throw. A coach is permitted to observe the throws, but must be off the field when they are completed.
Pitching Substitutions: Coach Delaying the Game

- Pitching is critical in our game and substituting the pitcher is a key personnel strategy.
- By rule, there are some specific time guidelines provided for the execution of substituting the game pitcher.
- It is becoming more noticeable that the defensive coach is extending his time around the mound while the substitute pitcher completes his warm-up pitches.
This delay of the game by lingering around the mound has become problematic.

While it provides the coach an opportunity to speak to the rest of the defensive team, it is also lengthening and delaying the game.
Pitching Substitutions:
Coach Delaying the Game (continued)

- The coach should make his substitution known to the umpire-in-chief, scorekeeper, relieve the game pitcher, instruct his defensive players quickly and leave the diamond area heading back to the dugout/bench area.

- For the sake of continuity, it is a better game when it is fluid and with minimal interruptions.
During a home-run celebration, team members must remain clear of the plate, allowing the umpire to ensure all runners legally touch.
Sportsmanship – Celebrations around or near Home Plate

- Any walk-off game winning base hit or home run generates immediate excitement for the player who hit the ball, his teammates and fans.
- Everyone on the winning team wants to congratulate the successful runner as he turns the corner at third base and heads to home plate.
- The problem is that the umpire-in-chief has to be able to verify that the runner scores.
A team is permitted to be outside the dugout and celebrate during a dead-ball, such as after a home run. However, Rule 3-3-1f (4) does not permit unsporting behavior and can result in the ejection of players who taunt.
Sportsmanship – Celebrations around or near Home Plate (continued)

- It is important to keep that area around home plate clear of bodies (and equipment) so the umpire can do his job correctly.

- In addition, hovering around the third base line and home plate is a perfect opportunity for bad sportsmanship actions with taunting and other boorish behavior.

- Celebrations should be more diligently observed because of the number of poor sportsmanship incidents being reported throughout the country.
Postgame Conduct

Umpires retain jurisdiction and can eject players or coaches until all umpires have left the field. Even though the game is over, this coach is subject to being ejected.
Since the umpires have left the field, umpires cannot issue a post-game ejection. However, if confronted by a coach, player or fan, umpires are expected to report the conduct to their state association office.
Postgame Conduct

- An occurrence that is becoming all too common is that the game has concluded and the losing team members, coaches or fans wait for the umpiring crew to leave the confines of the field and then verbally attack the umpires.
Postgame Conduct (continued)

- By rule, the umpires have the latitude through their local state association’s intervention to make a post-game report and forward it to the state association describing the type of bad behavior and based on the severity of the infraction, the umpires’ jurisdiction can be extended after the game has ended.

- Please discuss this with your local state association for their guidance and procedure.
Editorial Changes
3-3-1PEN

- Deleted the accompanying penalty for use of television monitoring or replay equipment.

- **Rationale**: Clarification.
Rule 5-5-1n

- Added n. Backswing interference occurs.

- **Rationale:** Consistent with the aforementioned definitions of follow-through and backswing interference.
Pitcher’s Arm Care Suggestions
Coaches have an obligation to take care of their pitchers. Arm injuries continue to rise and proper care must be taken. No single win is worth unnecessary risk or injury to a player.
Arm Care

When a pitcher indicates he is injured, the coach should remove him from the game immediately. His replacement gets as many throws as reasonable to warm up.
Taking care of a pitcher’s arm following a game is one thing that can be done to help prevent injuries. However, no training or treatment program will prevent all injuries.
Arm Care Suggestions

- Arm injuries are on the rise in high school age players.
- Most of the arm injuries are at the pitcher position.
- 45% of pitchers under the age of 12 experience chronic elbow pain.
- Ulnar collateral ligament reconstruction (Tommy John) surgeries have increased over 700% in the last decade for adolescent pitchers.
Arm Care Suggestions
4 Main Areas of Concern

- Anterior Shoulder
- Posterior Shoulder
- Medial Elbow
- Lateral Elbow
Arm Care Suggestions

Reasons

- Overuse, undertrained, inadequate rest, insufficient recovery and repair time
- Poor throwing/pitching delivery
- Incomplete warm-up and cool down activity
- Anatomical limitations or restrictions
- Too many games and not enough practices
- Poor physical conditioning
- Parental and coaching ignorance or worse… indifference
Arm Care Suggestions

Red Flags

- Decrease in velocity
- Lack of command, breaking ball loses snap
- Reluctant to throw off-speed pitches
- Pitching delivery changes
- Facial grimaces, frustration, rubbing or shaking arm
- Normal routine altered, less or more time spent to get ready to pitch
- Pain, sensitivity, burning sensation or swelling
- Loss of range of motion and/or grip strength
Arm Care Suggestions

Corrective Actions

- Proper technical, mental, nutritional and physical training before, during and after pitching with appropriate rest, recovery and repair time
- Proper practices, workload management for pitches, pitchers and entire staff
- Develop other pitchers to share the pitching load
- Observe and understand pitchers’ tendencies, make pain assessments, review past performances, preparation and routine
Arm Care Suggestions
Corrective Actions

- No overhead throwing of any kind for at least 2-3 months per year (4 months preferable).
- No competitive baseball pitching for at least 4 months per year.
- Do not pitch more than 100 innings in games in any calendar year.
- Avoid pitching on multiple teams with overlapping seasons.
- A pitcher should not also be team’s catcher due to overuse concerns.
Risk Factors for Shoulder and Elbow Injuries in Adolescent Baseball Pitchers

Samuel J. O'Brien, MD, Glenn S. Fleisig, PhD, Shouchen Sun, MS, Jenny Lotto, and James R. Andrews, MD
From the American Sport Medicine Institute, Birmingham, Alabama

Background: There is little evidence supporting current safety recommendations for adolescent pitchers.

Hypothesis: Pitching practices of adolescent pitchers without history of arm injury will be significantly different from those of adolescent pitchers who have experienced elbow or shoulder injury.

Study Design: Case-control study of 94 injuries, 35 controls.

Methods: Study of the adolescent pitchers who had developed or elbow or shoulder injuries and those pitchers who had never had such injuries, with a questionnaire assessing factors related to pitching and throwing. The principal outcome measure was the time to last injury or injury-related cessation of pitching. The researchers used statistical methods to compare the two groups using the t-test and p-value.

Results: The study found that significant differences were observed in the number of pitches per game and between games, with the pitchers who had experienced injuries pitching significantly fewer pitches than those who had not.

Conclusion: Pitching practices are significantly different between the two groups, with the pitchers who had injuries having a higher mean number of pitches per game and between games.

Clinical Relevance: These recommendations were made based on the study's results. Achieving these recommendations may reduce the incidence of shoulder injuries in adolescent pitchers.

Keywords: Pitch count, shoulder injury, throwing technique, prevention.

Baseball pitching biomechanics in relation to injury risk and performance

C. C. Fortenbaugh, MD, Glenn S. Fleisig, PhD, and James R. Andrews, MD

A study on the biomechanics of baseball pitching and its relation to injury risk and performance.

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References

- The references for these suggestions are from:
- Paul Niggebrugge – www.Be Your Best Academy.com
  - (http://www.asmi.org/research.php?page=research&section=positionStatement)
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