



March 28, 2022

NFHS Softball Weekly Rule Interpretations

Situation 1: With R1 on first base and no outs, B2 hits a hard fly ball to the gap between F7 and F8. R1 has passed second base when F8 makes a diving catch and throws the ball toward first base to appeal R1 leaving early. R1 has passed second and is retreating back to first base when F8's throw enters dead ball territory. R1 continues and retouches first base before the umpire awards any bases for the overthrow. The umpire then awards R1 second base explaining that R1 was returning to first base when the ball entered dead ball territory so first and second base are the two bases they are awarded. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. Awarded bases are governed by the position of the runner when the ball leaves the fielder's hand. In this case, R1 was between second and third base so the proper award should be home (third and home as the two awarded bases). Since R1 had retouched second base prior to the ball going out of play, they are allowed to legally retouch first base before accepting their awarded bases. Awarded bases must be run legally so R1 would be required to touch second, third and home plate or R1 could be ruled out if properly appealed for missing a base. (8-3-11, 8-4-3e PENALTY)

Situation 2: Team A, the visiting team, submits their lineup which is verified at the plate conference. They are batting a straight 9 with four subs (#8, #10, #12 and #15); their catcher (F2), batting second wearing #3 and their pitcher (F1), batting in the 7th position and wearing #6. In (a) #3 reaches base safely and the coach enters #8 as a courtesy runner for F2. In (b) there is no courtesy runner utilized in the top of the first inning. In both (a) and (b), #6 does not bat in the top of the first inning. In (c) F1 does reach base safely and utilizes #12 as a courtesy runner. In all cases, as Team A is about to take the field in the bottom of the first inning their coach informs the plate umpire that #6, their pitcher of record, has become sick and can no longer take the pitching position and the coach wishes to enter #15 as their new pitcher. In (a) the umpire rules that since a courtesy runner was used for F2 that both F1 and F2 must face the first batter, at least one pitch, in the bottom of the first inning. In (b) the umpire rules that regardless of whether a courtesy runner was used in the top of the first, both F1 and F2 must face the first batter for at least one pitch in the bottom of the first inning. In (c) the umpire rules that since #12 was F1's courtesy runner, #12 must enter the game as the new F1 and #15 is not allowed to enter the game as the new pitcher. **RULING:** These are all incorrect rulings. In (a) since F2 utilized a courtesy runner in the top of the first inning they would be required to face the first batter for one pitch, or if injured their courtesy runner would become a retroactive substitute for them. Since F1 did not utilize a courtesy runner, this rule does not apply and they are not required to face the first batter, #15 is recorded as a substitute for #6 and is the new pitcher. In (b) since neither F1 nor F2 utilized a courtesy runner, this rule does not apply and neither is required to face the first batter in the bottom of the first inning. In (c) since F1 became ill after utilizing a courtesy runner, #12 would become F1's retroactive substitute, placing #12 in the 7th position in the lineup as a substitute for #6. However, once this substitution was recorded, #15 would be allowed to enter the game for #12 in the 7th position in the lineup and would be allowed to become the new pitcher. (8-9-2, 8-9-2 EXCEPTION).

Situation 3: Team A is at bat with R1 on third base and no outs. B2 takes a pitch that the umpire rules a ball to bring the count to 2 balls 1 strike. R1 has taken a large lead and is slowly walking back toward third base as F2 returns the ball to F1 within the pitching circle. As R1 is still slowly returning to third base she sees F1 looking away from her and stops one step away from third base and then attempts to steal home. F1 throws to F2 and R1 slides under the tag at home. Team B's coach approaches the umpire requesting she rules this a violation of the look-back rule. The umpire does not view this as a look-back violation and allows R1's run to score. **RULING:** Correct ruling. On a pitched ball when the batter remains at bat, the look-back rule goes into effect once the pitcher has possession of the ball within the pitcher's circle. At this point, the runner may stop once but then must immediately return to the base or attempt to advance to the next base. In this situation, R1 was moving toward third base when F1 gained possession of the ball, by rule R1 still can stop once and then advance to home. (8-7-1, 8-7-2)