



March 25, 2024

NFHS Softball Weekly Rule Interpretations

Situation 1: With no runners on base, B1 hits a base hit to right field. As B1 is rounding first base F3 is standing on the corner of the base and B1 is forced to run around F3. The umpire signals and verbalizes “obstruction” and B1 seeing the ball being thrown in to F4 at second base returns to first base. The first base coach seeing and hearing the obstruction call tells B1 to run to second base where they are tagged out easily. The umpire rules that B1 remains out as the obstruction was cancelled once B1 returned to first base, the base they would have reached had there been no obstruction in their judgement.

RULING: Incorrect ruling. A runner cannot be called out between the two bases where they were obstructed, with only six exceptions as listed in rule 8-4-3 Penalty 1, Exceptions. In order for exception (a) to apply, the obstructed runner must reach the base they would have reached had there been no obstruction AND there is a subsequent play on a different runner. In this case there was no subsequent play on a different runner so B1 is still protected between first and second base, in this case when B1 was tagged out the umpire should have called a dead ball and awarded B1 first base, the base they would have reached in their judgement. (8-4-3b Penalty 1, Exception a)

Situation 2: With R1 on second base, B2 hits a base hit toward the center fielder. As B2 is rounding first base they are obstructed by F3 between first and second base. Seeing the ball being returned to F6 at second base B2 returns to first base. R1 has rounded third base and F6 now throws behind R1 trying to make a play on them returning to third base. B2 seeing the throw leaves first base and continues on to second base where they are thrown out on a close play sliding into second base. The umpire rules B2 is out. The offensive coach objects saying B2 was obstructed between first base and second base and cannot be put out between those two bases. **RULING:** Correct ruling by the umpire. Obstructed runners cannot be put out between the two bases where they were obstructed (unless they violate the exceptions listed). In this play, exception (a) was violated. Once B2 returned to first base, the base the umpire judged they would have reached had there been no obstruction, and there was a subsequent play on a different runner (R1 at third base) then B2 is no longer protected between first and second base and they may be put out. (8-4-3b Penalty 1, Exception a)

Situation 3: With R1 on third base, B2 bunts the ball toward F3. F3 fields the ball but holds it to keep R1 from scoring. B2 rounds first base and is obstructed by F4 as they are moving to cover first base causing both B2 and F4 to fall on the ground entangled in a pile. F3 returns the ball to F1 who is standing in the pitching circle. The umpire seeing B2 still laying on the ground calls a dead ball and rules B2 out for violating the look-back rule since they did not immediately return or attempt to advance to the next base. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling as described by the umpire. Since B2 was obstructed between first and second base, they cannot be put out between those two bases unless they violate one of the exceptions listed in 8-4-3b Penalty 1, Exceptions. Violating the look-back rule is not one of those exceptions. The reason this is not an exception, as can be seen in this play, the runner violating the look-back rule can be caused by the obstruction. B2 and F4 falling to the ground and working to get untangled and regain their footing caused B2 to violate the look-back rule as B2 was not able to immediately return to first or attempt to advance to second. The correct enforcement on this play is to call a dead ball when B2 was

put out by violating the look-back rule and award B2 the base they would have reached, in the umpire's judgement, had there not been obstruction. (8-4-3b Penalty 1, 8-7-1&2)