



Memorandum

To: NFHS Member State Association Baseball Liaisons

From: B. Elliot Hopkins, MLD, CAA, NFHS Director of Sports, Sanctioning and Student Services

Subject: First Base Running Lane Violations (Interference) Reminder

Date: May 9, 2024

Greetings,

As you are rapidly approaching your state baseball post season, I wanted to share with you what I am witnessing around the country and am starting to receive calls on...first base running lane violations. It has become a complex dilemma. Simply stated, the batter-runner by rule, has to run within the 3' wide running lane area the last 45' toward first base. The conundrum is that we are seeing offensive coaches teach their players to run outside the running lane to intentionally hinder the defense from throwing to first base. (1) If there are runner(s) on base, and there is hesitancy by the defense, the base runner(s) get to advance without being played upon. (2) Conversely, the defensive coach instructs the catcher, to "drill" the batter-runner in the back because they did not have an unobstructed throwing path to first base and prevents the runner(s) from advancing. (3) Umpires (if aware) will only address the running lane violation, but not deal with the advancing runner(s) who benefitted from this offensive gamesmanship and rule violation.

Our interpretation is running lane violations are a risk minimization issue. Someone can be seriously injured. Interference should be called at the moment when the catcher throws the ball to first base when the batter-runner is outside the running lane on the side from which the throw is being made. To not call interference is to encourage this practice as well as to encourage coaches having their catchers hit the batter-runner to get the interference call and keep runner(s) on base from advancing. If you have any questions regarding what we are observing, please do not hesitate to contact our office. Have a wonderful State Baseball Championship Season!

BEH/kjr

