



April 1, 2026

## NFHS Softball Weekly Rule Interpretations

It should be noted that due to some restructuring of the rule book performed between the 2025 and 2026 NFHS Softball Rules Book that some of the rule references have been updated. Please note the rule references provided will utilize the 2026 Rules Book.

**Situation 1:** With no runners on, B1 hits a shallow fly ball that falls in front of F8 who has possession of the ball about 10 feet behind second base. As B1 rounds first base they are obstructed by F3 that is on the edge of the base, the umpire signals a delayed dead ball and verbalizes “obstruction”. As F8 fakes a throw toward first base B1 returns to first base. The first base coach, seeing and hearing the obstruction call tells B1 to continue on to second base. F8 comes into the infield and tags B1 three steps from second base. The umpire calls B1 out, ruling that since B1 returned to first base, the base they would have reached in the umpire’s judgement had there not been obstruction, they are no longer protected between first and second base and B1 should remain out. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. B1 was obstructed between first and second base and cannot be put out between these two bases unless one of the six exceptions are met. One of those exceptions is that the obstructed runner, after the obstruction, safely obtains or returns to the base that would have been awarded, in the umpire’s judgment, had there been no obstruction and there is a subsequent play on a different runner. In this situation the obstructed runner did safely return to the base they would have been awarded had there been no obstruction however the second part of the exception was not met as there was no subsequent play on a different runner. B1 was still protected between first and second base due to the obstruction and when B1 was tagged out the umpire should have ruled a dead ball and awarded B1 first base as this is the base they would have reached had there been no obstruction. (8-5-2, Penalty 1 Exception a)

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

### OBSTRUCTION

- Impeding a runner means creating a negative effect on their ability to run the bases. This might include:
  - a runner slowing down
  - altering their intended path
  - stopping altogether
  - retreating to the previous base, or
  - making contact with a fielder that disrupts their movement
- The umpire must rely on judgment to determine both whether the runner was impeded and to what extent their progress was affected.

**Situation 2:** In the first four innings of the game Team A has used all three of their defensive conferences. In the sixth inning the coach of Team A requests time and in a) informs the plate umpire they want F3 (#3) and F1 (#1) to change positions. In b) they want S1 (#11) to enter the game for F1 (#1). In both cases Teams A’s coach does not have any conversations with their players, only reporting the

substitutions to the plate umpire and returning to the dugout. In c) the coach reports S2 (#12) for F1 (#2) and then has conversations with their players as S2 is throwing their warmup pitches. **RULING:** In a) and b) since the coach did not have conversations with their players #1 may return to the pitching position later in the game. In c) the coach is allowed to have conversations with their players while S2 is warming up but since they have already utilized their three conferences without penalty, the penalty for doing so results in #2 not being allowed to return to pitch for the remainder of the game. (3-6-1, Case Play 3.6.1 Situation F)

**Situation 3:** Team A is utilizing the DP/FLEX option in their lineup with #3 listed as the FLEX and #6 as B3 and listed as F9. In the fifth inning the coach informs the plate umpire “I want #9 (S1) to enter and play defense only.” The plate umpire double checks “Ok so you want #9 for #3 your FLEX?” The coach says “no, I want #9 to enter for #6 but I want them to play defense only”. The umpire advises the coach that the only player allowed to play defense only is the FLEX player and #9 can legally enter for #6 but #9 must bat when their position in the lineup is reached. **RULING:** Correct ruling. The only position in the lineup that can play defense only is the FLEX position. The FLEX may bat for the DP, but the FLEX is not required to bat and may remain in the 10<sup>th</sup> position in the lineup playing defense only. All other positions in the lineup must have a player bat in those positions in the lineup. (3-2-6)

#### **NFHS Softball Resource of the Week:**

**NFHS Softball Virtual Casebook:** <https://nfhs.org/sports/softball/resources>

**2026 NFHS DP FLEX Jobs:** <https://nfhs.org/sports/softball/resources>

**2026 DP FLEX:** <https://nfhs.org/sports/softball/resources>