



April 15, 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: F3, #11 is batting third in the lineup. They bat and reach first base safely. Team A's coach asks for time and enters #12 to run for #11. In a) #11 has a legal reentry, as this was the first time they had left the game when #12 entered and ran for them. In b) #11 does not have a legal reentry as this was the second time they had left the game when #12 entered and ran for them. In both cases, without being reported in the bottom of the inning #11 catches a throw at first base to retire Team B's first batter of the inning. In both cases Team B's coach approaches the umpire claiming this is an illegal substitute and the player is restricted to the bench/dugout for the remainder of the game and they get the option to take the play or nullify the out and B1 gets to bat again with the same count. The umpire agrees. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling in a); correct ruling in b). In a) #11 has a legal reentry available so they are not an illegal player as they have eligibility to re-enter the game, in this case they are just an unreported substitute. The penalty for this is a team warning for the first offense and the next offender and head coach are restricted to the dugout/bench area for the remainder of the game for a second offense. In b) since #11 does not have eligibility to re-enter the game they are an illegal substitute. In this case #11 would be restricted to the dugout/bench for the remainder of the game. The offensive team also has the option of taking the play or accepting the penalty which would remove the out and allow B1 to bat again with the same count. (2-57-1, 2-57-2, 2-57-3, 3-2-4, 3-3-3, 3-5-7)

Situation 2: In the third inning it is observed that the coach in the dugout is asking the catcher where a pitch missed the strike zone through electronic one-way communication and F2 is then pointing and saying "outside" toward the dugout. After a few observances of this process the umpire rules this a violation of the electronic communication rule as the coach and catcher are having two-way communication and ejects the catcher. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. The rule allows one-way electronic communication from the coach in the dugout to the catcher while on defense. It does not restrict the catcher from answering the coach with verbal comments or gestures. The only restriction is the catcher cannot answer the coach via electronic communication. When the one-way electronic communication rule was implemented, it was the intent to not restrict communication that had occurred or could still occur without electronic communication. In this example a coach could yell from the dugout to the catcher "Hey where was that pitch?" the catcher could reply "outside" and/or pointing outside. This should not be restricted or enforced differently if the coach simply asked the same question via one-way electronic communication. Restrictions are not on two-way communication, they are on two-way electronic communication, as long as the catcher does not reply to the coach via electronic communication they have not violated the rule. (1-9-6, 3-5-1)

Situation 3: In the fifth inning F2 requests time to confer with the pitcher, the umpire signals and verbalizes "Time" allowing the players to confer. Later in the same half inning F6 requests time to calm

F1 down and the umpire denies the request stating the team has already used their one player-to-player conference allowed that half inning. **RULING:** Incorrect statement by the umpire. NFHS Softball does not have a limit on the player-to-player conferences allowed in a half inning or in the game. These types of conferences are controlled by the umpires as a part of game management. If the umpire feels the conferences are becoming excessive, they have the right to deny a time out for a player-to-player conference but there is no rule to reference it is a part of game management working to maintain a good game flow. There is also not a required time for player-to-player or charged defensive conferences with the coach and team, the amount of time given is again governed by the umpire as a part of game management. Umpires should allow teams a reasonable amount of time to have discussions including a reasonable number of player-to-player conversations but a part of their responsibilities in managing the game is not allowing excessive stoppages of play nor allowing excessive time during these stoppages to adversely impact the game flow.