



April 29, 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 R1 on third base, B2, a right-handed batter, takes a pitch that is called a ball. In a) the batter remains stationary in the batter's box. In b) the batter partially moves toward third base with a foot out of the batter's box to obtain a signal from the third base coach. In both cases R1 is only one step from third base returning toward third base when F2 throws toward third base contacting B2. The defensive coach insists this is interference and B2 should be ruled out. **RULING:** In a) the batter is not guilty of interference. If the batter is in the batter box and they make any movement which hinders the catcher's attempt to play on a runner they would then be guilty of interference. Although the batter's box is not a safe haven where the batter can never be called out for interference, as the rule describes they must move in a way that causes interference. As described, the batter did not make a movement that hindered the catcher so they would not be guilty of interference. In b) the rule states the batter is guilty of interference if they interfere with the catcher's throwing by stepping out of the batter's box. Also in both cases, as this play is described, R1 is very close to third base and is returning to third base, with this in mind it is questionable if the catcher has a legitimate opportunity to retire R1. If there is no play to interfere with, there should not be an interference call in these situations. In both cases, another consideration should be if F2 purposely throws at B2 to "draw" an interference call. This type of action should most likely be considered an unsporting act and should be dealt with accordingly. Every time an offensive player is hit with a thrown ball the defense did not intentionally throw the ball at them, but this sort of "play" or purposeful act should not be allowed. Rules are designed to protect the balance of fair play between offense and defense. In this situation if the offense commits an act of interference, hindering, impeding or confusing the defense from making a play, which in this case is an attempt to retire a runner, the rule is there to remove this improper act by the offense by ruling the batter out for committing interference. However, the rule is not designed to allow the defense to gain an advantage by receiving an out for purposely endangering the offense by throwing the ball at them. There are a lot of plays during a softball game where the offense and defense are in close proximity and at times an offensive player will be contacted with a thrown ball. This could result in an interference call, a no call (was not interference) or a ruling of the defense performing an unsporting act by purposely throwing at an offensive player. Umpires must take all the aspects of each specific situation into consideration in order to make a proper ruling. (2-31-1, 2-46-2c, 3-5-13c, 7-4-4b&c)

Situation 2: In the third inning Team A is batting with B3 due up to bat but B4 enters the batter's box. With a 2 ball-2 strike count Team A's coach approaches the umpire telling them that B3 should be the proper batter. The umpire does not allow B3 to take B4's place stating that only the defense can appeal batting out of order. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. The rule allows for either team to correct the error while the batter is still at bat, with the proper batter taking their position in the batter's box and assuming the

ball and strike count. Only the defense can appeal after an improper batter has completed their time at bat, but during the at bat the error can be corrected by either team. (7-1-1, 7-1-2, 7.1.2 Situation A)

Situation 3: With R1 on third base, they take a big lead on the pitch and are already walking back slowly toward third base as the ball is returned to F1 in the circle. F1 walks to the back of the circle looking away from R1. R1 seeing that F2 is not watching them anymore stops short of third base and advances immediately toward home where they are safe as F1 was late in getting the ball to F2. The umpire rules this a violation of the look-back rule and calls R1 out. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling as described. As described R1 has started to return to third base prior to the look-back rule being in effect, so they have not utilized their one allowed stop. Since they did not return and touch third base (stop at a base) and only stopped once after the look-back rule was in effect and then immediately advanced toward home they did not violate the look-back rule. (8-8-2, 8-8-3)