



2011 NFHS SOFTBALL POINTS OF EMPHASIS

1. **SPORTSMANSHIP.** The NFHS disapproves of any form of behavior intended or designed to embarrass, ridicule or demean others. There have been instances noted nationally of the Public Address (PA) system being utilized to intimidate or “taunt” the visiting team by playing negative sound effects when specific opponents come to bat or the playing of “motivational” music only for the home team. When the PA system is used for announcements, introductions, sound effects, music, etc., the presentation should be as neutral as possible. Clear guidelines and expectations should be developed by school administrators and shared with the individuals serving in this capacity so presentations are not viewed as acts of intimidation.
2. **TEAM AND PLAYER EQUIPMENT.** NFHS rules require umpires to check most equipment (10-2-3a) prior to the contest. The following are of specific concern/interest:
 - A. **Bats.** All bats should be free of rattles, dents, burrs, cracks and sharp edges. Materials inside the bat or treatments/devices used to alter the bat specifications and/or enhance performance (i.e. bat warmers) are prohibited and render the bat illegal. Bats that are broken, altered or that deface the ball are also illegal. More and more players are knocking their metal cleats against their bats to loosen debris from the shoes. A resulting nick or paint chip in the bat from the metal cleats should not render a bat illegal.
 - B. **Gloves/Mitts.** The gloves/mitts rule was reorganized this year to clarify the requirements. Gloves /mitts (excluding lace color and logo) containing more than two colors are illegal. In addition, an editorial change this year clarified that any gray, white or optic colored marking (not just a circle) that gives the appearance of a ball is not permitted. The umpire determines if a marking gives the appearance of the ball or is distracting.
 - C. **Drying Agents.** Pitchers have been permitted to utilize powdered resin to dry the hands under the supervision and control of the umpire. An editorial change this year added any comparable drying agent. Please note that “rock resin” is not considered a comparable drying agent and is still prohibited.
3. **FIELD OF PLAY.** All high school softball fields used for competition should be properly maintained. This includes ensuring that the grass is well groomed and mowed to the proper height. The field should be level with no obstructions between the foul lines. All lines should be white and properly marked. The foul lines should extend from home plate, beyond the bases, to the outfield fence. If no outfield fence is present, the foul lines should extend at

least 185 feet into the outfield. The catcher's box should be marked 10 feet deep and 8 feet, 5 inches in width behind the batters boxes. If a designated media area will be used, the area must be marked prior to the start of the game.

4. **GAME MANAGEMENT.** There are several game-management areas that will assist in a smooth-running contest. The following are of particular concern:
 - A. **Lineup Cards.** At the pre-game conference, lineup cards should be verified by the head coach as correct with name and uniform number and with all substitutes listed. This year's new rule provides a penalty for a coach who fails to submit an accurate lineup card. Umpires can assist with managing this situation by reminding coaches of the new rule and giving them ample opportunity to verify the lineup card before final submission.
 - B. **Field Areas.** Designated warm-up areas should be located in an area adjacent to the field and be in view of the umpires. During the contest, players must warm up within the confines of the field or in the adjacent warm up area. Coaches must remain in their designated dugout/bench area while his/her team is on defense.
 - C. **Pace of Game.** To ensure the appropriate pace of the game, umpires must enforce the one-minute warm-up period between innings. This one minute period begins with the last out of the previous half inning.