



2012 NFHS SOFTBALL POINTS OF EMPHASIS

1. PITCHING

A. Pitching Regulations. NFHS pitching regulations were created and are maintained for high-school-age pitchers of all skill levels, not just those seeking participation opportunities at higher levels. A high school pitcher may begin with one or two feet on the pitching plate. The pitcher may also step back (before the hands come together) and then forward to gain momentum in her pitching motion. This enables younger and/or less experienced players to have success within the rules of the high school game. The interscholastic community believes the high school rule in this regard is appropriate for the participants it serves.

B. 24-Inch Width Infractions. The NFHS Softball Rules Committee is still concerned over the enforcement of the 24-inch width pitching requirement. Pitchers are starting and/or finishing outside the 24-inch width limitation without an illegal pitch being declared, giving a significant advantage to the pitcher and defensive team. In addition, research indicates that pitchers are more susceptible to arm injuries when they attempt to throw a “screwball.” Throwing this type of pitch sometimes forces the pitcher to release the ball and conclude her natural pitching motion outside the 24-inch width of the pitching plate.

The home plate umpire must use his or her peripheral vision to detect this violation, since tracking the pitch from the release point to the catcher’s glove is the priority. However, this should not be an excuse for ignoring obvious violations. The base umpire may also detect this illegal pitch, depending on the field position, looking for pivot and landing foot marks outside the lane in the dirt as the pitcher finishes her motion.

2. LEGAL APPAREL AND EQUIPMENT

A. Equipment Check. The committee and softball administrators around the country continue to be concerned about the use of illegal and/or non-approved equipment. So concerned that a rules change was approved to strengthen the penalty for use of altered or non-approved bats. The head coach is responsible to ensure all equipment used by his or her players is legal and proper. Umpires are still required to check bats and helmets prior to each contest. Teams must make all bats and helmets available for the pregame equipment check. All equipment is expected to meet safety standards and rule requirements.

B. Pitcher's Uniform. A pitcher is prohibited from wearing or using any item that, in the umpire's judgment, distracts the batter. There have been reports of the pitchers wearing items with optic yellow in prominent locations. Any use of equipment or part of the uniform that, in the umpire's view, would distract the batter, shall be addressed on a case-by-case basis and could require the removal of such equipment.

3.ON-DECK BATTERS/LOCATION. It is the responsibility of the home team/game management to place the on-deck circles in the appropriate locations (2-37) so as to reduce risk to those players. Additionally, it is the responsibility of the coach to ensure that his or her players are aware of the rules related to the on-deck circle. The players must remain aware of the risks posed by being in the circle during play. Players must be in the on-deck circle (2-5-3) and be aware of the status of the ball at all times.