



## 2010 NFHS SOFTBALL RULES CHANGES

### POWERPOINT SCRIPT

**Slide 3:** The pitching distance for fast-pitch females shall be 43 feet from the tip of home plate to the pitcher plate. This rules change has been considered by the NFHS Softball Rules Committee for the past ten years. Questionnaire results over the last several years indicate an increased interest in adopting the rules change, especially among the group most affected by it – coaches.

**Slide 4:** The change was approved by the rules committee this year after two member state associations – Florida over a four-year period and Oregon for one year – experimented and obtained very positive results. Coaches surveyed within the experimenting states, and those visiting from other states playing at 43 feet for the first time, were overwhelmingly supportive of the change.

**Slide 5:** Game statistics gathered from experimentation show that nearly every offensive statistic had a slight increase. Based on these statistics, the new pitching distance appears to create better balance between the offense and defense providing more pitched balls hit into play. When more balls are hit into play, the defense becomes more involved in the game, thus enhancing skill development.

**Slide 7:** Pitching distance is measured from the front edge of the pitcher's plate to the back tip of home plate. A presentation can be found in the Softball area of the NFHS Website, detailing how to remove and relocate a permanently installed pitching plate (one not just staked in).

**Slide 8:** The entire bat rule was reorganized and clarified. Definitions for each portion of the bat were added to clarify required specifications. As bat technology evolves, more clarity was necessary for consumers and manufacturers.

The bat must still meet the 2004 ASA Bat Performance Standard and all requirements in Rule 1-5.

ASA has reorganized its Website and the list of “non-approved” bats is much shorter than it used to be. The list ONLY has those bats there were once “certified” as meeting the standard and thus, displaying the mark, and were found through testing to be out of compliance. ASA is no longer listing bats that were never intended to be “certified” (and display the mark) since they were manufactured with the intent of exceeding the standard to sell to other organizations.

**Slide 9: Knob.** The bat knob shall be  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch and protrude at a 90-degree angle from the handle. The knob may be molded, lathed, welded or permanently fastened. Devices, attachments or wrappings are permitted except those that cause the knob to become flush with the handle. A one-piece rubber knob and bat grip combination is illegal.

**Handle/Grip.** The bat handle is the area of the bat that begins at, but does not include the knob and ends where the taper begins to increase in diameter. The handle shall have a round or oval cross-section. The grip shall extend a minimum of 10 inches, but not more than 15 inches, from the small end of the bat. A safety grip shall be made of cork, tape (no smooth, plastic tape) or composition material (commercially manufactured). Resin, pine tar or spray substances to enhance the hold are permitted on the grip only.

**Taper.** The taper is the transition area which connects the narrower handle to the wider barrel portion of the bat. The taper shall have a smooth, solid surface and shall have a conical shape. Its length and material may vary.

**Barrel.** The barrel is the area intended for contact with the pitched ball; it shall be round and smooth.

**End Cap.** The end cap is made of rubber, vinyl, plastic or other approved material. It shall be firmly secured and permanently affixed to the end of the bat so that it cannot be removed by anyone other than the manufacturer, without damaging or destroying it. A one-piece construction bat (e.g. wood), will not have an end cap.

**Slide 10:** **1.5.1 SITUATION:** During the umpires' inspection of equipment prior to the game, it is observed that several bats are designed with holes in the taper. **RULING:** The taper must be a smooth, solid surface; therefore the bats are illegal and may not be used in the game. (1-5-1c)

**Slide 11:** The first PlayPic illustrates a bat taper with a "hole." This bat is illegal since it does NOT have a smooth, solid surface.

The second PlayPic illustrates a bat with a taper that has flat portions ("rails"). This bat is legal since its taper is a smooth, solid surface and a conical shape.

**Slide 12:** An exception was added to permit unadorned devices, such as bobby pins, barrettes, or hair clips, no longer than 2 inches, to be worn to control a player's hair. The rule permits players a practical means of dealing with hair control.

The NFHS Volleyball Committee permitted 2" barrettes. The NFHS Softball Committee felt that other items with the same size restriction, like barrettes and clips, should also be permitted. Part of the rationale by the Softball Committee involved the potential risk to opposing players (minimal) and the "nuisance factor" if one of these items were to dislodge on to the playing surface (also minimal).

**Slide 13:** All items illustrated are permitted if they are no more than 2 inches. Umpires always have the discretion to prohibit an item they deem to be potentially dangerous (3-2-14).

**3.2.12 SITUATION:** At the pre-game meeting, the umpires notice that the captain of Team A has (a), a two-inch bobby pin in her hair, or (b), a four-inch barrette. **RULING:** Unadorned hair devices no longer than two inches may be worn to control a player's hair. In (a), the item is legal. In (b), the item is illegal and must be removed before the player may participate.

**Slide 14:** The required number of innings pitched for a starting pitcher to be credited with a win has been changed to half of the total number of innings played in the game. The rules change gives greater clarity in determining the winning pitcher. A starting pitcher now has the ability to earn a win if she re-enters the game as pitcher, was moved to a different defensive position and subsequently returns to

pitch or the game is terminated due to the run-rule; all are common occurrences in softball. Previous rules were based on baseball pitching rules, which do not regularly occur in softball.

**Rule 9, Section 6, Article 6 . . .** Winning and losing pitchers are determined as follows:

a. The starting pitcher is credited with a win in the following circumstances:

1. When she pitches at least half of the innings in the game and her team stays ahead for the remainder of the game.
2. The starting pitcher has pitched the required number of innings, her team is ahead or tied when she is replaced, she re-enters the game with her team behind, and her team subsequently recaptures the lead.

**NOTE:** A pitcher cannot receive credit for a save if she receives the win.

b. The relief pitcher is credited with a win in the following circumstances:

1. The starting pitcher did not pitch the required number of innings, or her team fell behind.
2. The relief pitcher who pitches most effectively after the starting pitcher did not pitch the required number of innings, more than one relief pitcher was used and the lead was never lost.
3. The relief pitcher was the pitcher of record when her team gained the lead and stayed in the lead.
4. A relief pitcher left the pitching position while the score was tied or her team was behind, and she re-entered as the pitcher and regained the lead.

d. A pitcher shall be charged with the loss when the team is behind or falls behind because of runs assessed to that pitcher and the team does not subsequently tie the score nor take the lead.

**9.6.6 SITUATION A:** Team A's starting pitcher pitches two innings. With her team ahead, she is replaced by a relief pitcher in the third inning. Team A retains the lead when the starting pitcher returns to pitch the sixth and the seventh innings. Team A wins the game. **RULING:** Since the starting pitcher pitched four total innings out of seven, she is credited with the win. **COMMENT:** The innings pitched do not have to be consecutive in order to be credited with the win.

**9.6.6 SITUATION B:** With two outs in the third inning and her team ahead, Team A's starting pitcher is taken out of the game. Team A stays ahead for the remainder of the game. The game is concluded in (a) three innings, (b) five innings, or (c) seven innings. **RULING:** In (a) and (b), the starting pitcher has pitched more than half of the innings and is credited with the win. In (c), the starting pitcher has not pitched more than half of the innings and is not credited with the win.

**Slide 15: \*1.3.8 SITUATION:** Balls given to the plate umpire prior to the game (a) do not have the NFHS Authenticating Mark, or (b) are not marked with the dynamic stiffness measurement. **RULING:** In (a) all balls shall have the Authenticating Mark labeled on the cover. In (b), softballs are not required to have the dynamic stiffness measurement labeled on the cover. Manufacturers are required to comply with

the dynamic stiffness specification at the time of manufacture; therefore, marking the ball is currently not necessary.

**Slide 17:** An eighth of an inch was added to the maximum circumference of both 11- and 12-inch softballs, to 11¼ and 12¼, respectively. This change in specifications makes the softball specifications the same as other rules codes and assists manufacturers in producing a consistent product.

**Slide 18:** Rule 2-20-1f was clarified to state that a batted ball is fair if it first falls or is first touched on or over fair territory beyond first, **second**, or third base. If a ball were to be hit on or beyond second base and then roll into foul territory between home and first (or home and third), it would be a fair ball. In the past without this editorial change, that same play could be called a foul ball. Even though unlikely to occur, it is possible and must be covered by rule.

**Slide 19:** **\*2.20.1 SITUATION:** B1 hits a fly ball to the infield that falls untouched (a) behind second base, or (b) behind the pitching circle, but just in front of second base. After hitting the ground, the ball continues to spin and rolls between home and first base and comes to rest on foul ground. **RULING:** In (a), fair ball. In (b), foul ball. (2-20-1f; 2-25-1a)

**Slide 20:** Rule 3-1-3 was clarified to state that a team's lineup card shall include the first initial and last name of each player.

**Slide 21:** There is no penalty for not turning in a completed lineup card, but it should be returned to the coach to be done properly. If the coach refuses, he/she should be charged with an unsporting act and penalized accordingly (3-6-13).

**Slide 22:** A proper lineup card is illustrated with first initials and last names, jersey numbers, positions and the batting order.

**Slide 23:** A note was added to Rule 8-2-9 to clarify that the batter-runner is called out when she hits an infield fly even when the infield fly is not initially called. However, it must be brought to the umpire's attention before the next pitch.

**Slide 24:** This illustrates the sequence when an infield fly was in effect, but the umpire(s) failed to call it.

**Slide 27:** Illegal pitches must be called – as emphasized in recent years.

**Slide 28:** When the pitcher completes the delivery of an illegal pitch, a delayed-dead ball is signaled by the umpire by extending the left arm horizontally. If the illegal pitch is called by the plate umpire, it should be called in a voice loud enough for the batter and catcher to hear it. If the illegal pitch is called by the base umpire, it should be called in a voice loud enough for the nearest fielder to hear it. The penalty is a ball awarded to the batter and all base runners are awarded one base without liability to be put out. If the batter hits the ball fair or foul, or becomes a base runner, the coach of the team at bat has the option of the result of the play or the penalty for an illegal pitch.

**Slide 29:** The failure of players to hear the call does not void the call. Batters should be coached to know they can swing at illegal pitches, which results in options for their team/coach.

**Slide 30:** A runner is considered outside the running lane if either foot is completely outside the lane and in contact with the ground. Therefore, the player in the illustration is "in" the running lane.

Players must understand that once they reach the running lane they should run completely inside it.

**Slide 31:** The three-foot running lane is a space defined by a line drawn 3 feet from and parallel to the first-base foul line starting halfway between home and first base and extending to first base in foul territory.

**Slide 32 & 33:** In all situations when the batter-runner is entitled to run (i.e., a batted ball, a base on balls or a dropped third strike), she must use the three-foot running lane. An award of first base on a base on balls does not negate the requirement to use the three-foot running lane. The batter-runner is out if she runs outside the three-foot lane and, in the judgment of the umpire, interferes with the fielder taking the throw at first base (there must be a throw); however, the batter-runner may run outside the three-foot lane to avoid a fielder attempting to field a batted ball.

**Slide 34:** Many new equipment products continue to be introduced into interscholastic softball. Rule 1-8-1 states that, "non-traditional game equipment must be reviewed by the NFHS Softball Rules Committee before it will be permitted." NFHS staff and the committee continue to consider non-traditional equipment as it is introduced to the game. However, many new products seem to appear in competition without the committee being given an opportunity to review the items.

**Slide 35:** Coaches and administrators should contact their state high school association to have non-traditional game equipment reviewed. Manufacturers are encouraged to contact the NFHS prior to introducing, distributing or selling non-traditional equipment to interscholastic programs.

**Slide 36:** Examples of non-traditional equipment that has been introduced into HS softball.

**Slide 37:** It is believed that many coaches and umpires still may not completely understand the DP/FLEX rule (3-3-6) since it was passed in 2004. The committee felt another "refresher" would be appropriate to more fully understand and utilize all the options available with the rule. The DP/FLEX rule was originally adopted because it provides more participation opportunities for student-athletes and more flexibility to coaches.

**Slide 38: A. For Coaches – Basic Rules to Remember.** Keep these basic rules in mind:

1. Decide the 10 players you want to be designated as starters: 1) list the nine players you want to have in the batting order on lines 1 through 9; 2) list the name of the remaining player (FLEX) on the 10<sup>th</sup> line.
2. Fill in the defensive positions and list the player not initially playing defense as the DP.

**Slide 39:** 3. When making lineup changes:

- a. The DP cannot play defense only and the FLEX cannot play offense only.
- b. When the DP spot in the batting order comes up, either the DP, FLEX or their legal substitutes must bat or run the bases. It is the only offensive spot the DP or FLEX player may hold.
- c. The DP can replace anyone on defense any time, any number of times while the FLEX player may replace the DP any time, any number of times.
- d. When any of the first nine players listed on the card leaves the batting order, she has left the game and when the FLEX player leaves the game on defense, she has left the game.

**Slide 41: For Coaches – Basic Utilization Strategies.** The following are two basic strategies a coach might utilize to match the skills of the DP and FLEX players to complement one another. Further examples can be found on the NFHS Web site ([www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org)).

1. Objective: to utilize a fast runner who is a weak hitter (FLEX) to run for the solid hitting DP.
  - a. Matchup: assuming your pitcher can hit for herself, pair up an solid hitter (DP) with a player of exceptional speed but who is a weak hitter (FLEX).
  - b. Typical sequence: DP hits safely; FLEX enters to run for her; DP re-enters and hits safely; FLEX enters to run for her; sub #1 hits for DP (since the DP already used her one re-entry), FLEX enters to run for sub #1; sub #1 re-enters and hits safely; FLEX enters to run for sub #1; sub #2 hits safely; FLEX enters to run for her; and so on.
2. Objective: list a power hitter as the FLEX player when you have a platoon of players who will be the DP's.
  - a. Matchup: assuming your pitcher can hit for herself, pair up an average player (DP) with a good hitting, but slow runner (FLEX) who also plays defense. Also used for a good hitting pitcher (FLEX) who you do not want running the bases unnecessarily.
  - b. Typical sequence: as the spot in the batting order comes up, enter the FLEX who hits safely; re-enter the DP to run; enter the FLEX who hits safely; sub #1 enters to run (since the DP already used her one re-entry); enter the FLEX who hits safely; sub #1 re-enters to run; FLEX hits safely; sub #2 enters to run; and so on.

**Slide 42: For Umpires.** The following are helpful hints in properly maintaining your lineup card:

1. A team may use the DP/FLEX option provided it is made known prior to the start of the game.
2. The DP's name is indicated on the lineup as one of the nine hitters in the batting order.
3. The name of the player for whom the DP is batting (FLEX) is placed in the 10th position in the lineup.

**Slide 43:** 4. The DP may be substituted for at any time by a legal substitute or the FLEX may play offense for the DP. In either case, the DP has left the game.

5. The DP may play defense at any position.

6. The FLEX may be substituted for at any time by a legal substitute or the DP may play defense for the FLEX. In either case, the FLEX has left the game.

**Slide 44:** 7. Placing the FLEX into one of the first nine positions for someone other than the DP's position is considered an illegal substitution.

8. A team may go from 10 to nine players and back to 10 any number of times during the game; the game may also end with 10 or nine players.

9. The DP and FLEX may never be on offense at the same time; however, they may play defense at the same time.

**Slide 46:** The NFHS Softball Umpires Manual is printed every other year and 2010 is a publication year. Few overall changes were made.

**Slide 59:** This slide contains several “layers” of the lineup card that can only be seen when the slide show is being viewed.

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