



## 2011 NFHS SOFTBALL RULES CHANGES

### POWERPOINT SCRIPT

**Slide 3: PENALTY ESTABLISHED FOR LINEUP CARD INACCURACIES (3-1-3 PENALTY):** A new penalty was established for a head coach who submits a lineup card that must subsequently be corrected with the proper name/number of a player or if substitutes are added after the lineup card is submitted and verified. The new penalty will be a team warning. If the head coach has to again make a change to the lineup card after the initial team warning, he/she will then be restricted to the dugout/bench area for the remainder of the game. Opposing coaches and scorekeepers use a player's jersey number to identify them as the proper batter and for substitution purposes. Previously, when the number was incorrect or substitutes were not listed, it caused a great deal of confusion without penalty. The new rule establishes a penalty if a coach fails to submit an accurate lineup card regarding name and number; similar to other team sports where a team's roster and a specific playing order are paramount. This new penalty does not affect the illegal substitution or batting out of order rules.

**3-1-3 PENALTY:** After the lineup card has been submitted to and verified by the umpire and a change is subsequently made to a player/substitute name or number, or if a player/substitute is added to the lineup card, the umpire shall issue a team warning to the head coach of the team involved. Any further changes made to a player/substitute name or number results in the head coach being restricted to the dugout/bench area for the remainder of the game.

**Slide 4: From 2011 SB Case Book:**

**3.1.3 SITUATION:** The visiting team's head coach submits and verifies a lineup card with No. 4, L. Brown listed eighth in the batting order and playing first base. However, L. Brown is actually wearing uniform No. 21. After reaching base in the top of the third inning, the home coach appeals to the umpire that L. Brown is batting out of order. **RULING:** L. Brown is the correct batter but is in violation of the rule that requires a player's name and shirt number be correct on the lineup card. A team warning is issued to the visiting head coach, the error is corrected on the lineup card and play is resumed. Any subsequent name or number correction (including adding a substitute) to the lineup card will result in the visiting head coach being restricted to the team dugout/bench area for the remainder of the game.

**Slide 5:** Previous rules books for most sports included language directing officials to remove an athlete from play if "unconscious or apparently unconscious." That language has been changed to the following: *Any athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion or balance problems) shall be immediately removed from the contest and shall not return to play until cleared by an appropriate health-care professional.* The common signs, symptoms and behaviors of concussed athletes may be found in Appendix A, page 86, of the 2011 NFHS Softball Rules Book.

Umpires, coaches and administrators should be looking for signs of concussion in all athletes and should immediately remove any suspected concussed athlete from play and make every effort to ensure a concussed athlete does not continue to participate.

**Slide 7: From 2011 SB Case Book:**

**3.3.9 SITUATION:** F7 and F8 both make a diving attempt to catch a fly ball hit to left-center field and collide; both appear injured. However, F7 exhibits signs consistent with a concussion and is immediately removed from the game by the umpires. Later in the game, the head coach reports to the plate umpire that F7 will reenter the contest. **RULING:** The rules permit F7 to return to the game once she has been cleared by an appropriate health-care professional. The responsibility for obtaining that clearance rests with the coach/school, and need not be verified by the umpires (unless state procedures require verification). If the coach attempts to reenter F7 in the game, the umpires shall assume the coach/school followed the appropriate return-to-play procedures and F7 is eligible to participate. (10-2-3k)

**Slide 8: Concussion Recognition and Management :**

Adolescent athletes are particularly vulnerable to the effects of concussion. Once considered little more than a minor “ding” on the head, it is now understood that a concussion has the potential to result in death, or short- and long-term changes in brain function. A concussion is a brain injury that results in a temporary disruption of normal brain function. A concussion occurs when the brain is violently rocked back and forth or twisted inside the skull as a result of a blow to the head or body.

The NFHS has been at the forefront of national sports organizations in emphasizing the importance of concussion education, recognition and proper management for the past several years. In 2008, the NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC) advocated that a concussed athlete be removed from play and not allowed to return to play on that same day. In 2009, this position was adopted by the leading group of sports medicine experts and the National Football League (NFL).

To highlight the continuing importance of this issue, the NFHS SMAC and each sport’s rules committee has taken the unprecedented step of including Concussion Recognition and Management as a rules change and/or point of emphasis in each NFHS sport rules book for the 2010-11 year. The purpose of this is to explain the change in verbiage in the NFHS Softball Rules Book regarding the umpire’s recognition of a player exhibiting the signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion and to emphasize the importance of proper concussion management.

Concussions at all levels of sports have received a great deal of attention in the past few years. Attention has increased even more so over the past year, culminating with the NFL, NCAA and NFHS testifying before the United States Congress about what each organization is doing to protect athletes from concussion.

Given that most concussed athletes do not lose consciousness, yet they often show other common signs, symptoms and behaviors of concussion, the NFHS SMAC strongly believes that officials must be empowered to remove these athletes from play, thus protecting them from potential further injury. Continued participation in any sport following a concussion can lead to worsening concussion symptoms, as well as increased risk for further injury to the brain, and even death.

**Slide 9: Concussion Recognition and Management (continued):**

The game official is not responsible for the evaluation or management of the athlete after he/she is removed from play. The responsibility of further evaluating and managing the symptomatic athlete falls upon the head coach, appropriate health-care professional or other individual designated by school administrators. If an appropriate health-care professional determines that the athlete HAS NOT suffered a concussion, the athlete may return to play.

An “appropriate health-care professional” must be determined by each member state association and/or school district with respect to state laws and local preferences. Such individuals should be knowledgeable in the evaluation and management of sports-related concussions and may, depending on controlling law, include MDs, DOs and certified athletic trainers.

**Slide 10: Concussion Recognition and Management (continued):**

If there is no appropriate health-care professional available to evaluate the athlete, the athlete SHOULD NOT be permitted by the coach to return to play. Please see the “NFHS Suggested Guidelines for Management of Concussion in Sports” at [www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org) for further information on sideline management.

The official does not need written permission for an athlete to return nor does the official need to verify the credentials of the appropriate health-care professional unless mandated by specific state association procedures. Ensuring compliance with the Suggested Management Guidelines is a health and safety issue and should be the responsibility of the head coach and school administration, NOT the game official.

**Slide 11: Suggested Concussion Management:**

The suggested guidelines for concussion management fall outside the realm of game management, but are clearly a health and safety issue for coaches and administrators. These guidelines should also be applied to practices and scrimmages. The position of the NFHS SMAC is that no athlete should return to play or practice on that same day after suffering a concussion. Studies have shown medical professionals that the school-aged brain does not recover quickly enough for a high school athlete to return to activity in such a short time.

Athletes with continued concussion symptoms are at significant risk for recurrent, cumulative and even catastrophic consequences of a second concussive injury. Such risks are minimized if the athlete is allowed time to recover from the concussion and return to play decisions are carefully made. No athlete should return-to-sport or other at-risk participation when symptoms of concussion are present and recovery is ongoing.

**Slide 12:** For further details, please see the “NFHS Suggested Guidelines for Management of Concussion in Sports” at [www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org).

**Slide 13:** Don’t forget about the FREE Concussion Course offered at [www.nfhslearn.com](http://www.nfhslearn.com).

**Slide 14: SCORED/RETIRED RUNNER INTERFERENCE RULE REVISED (8-6-18):** The word “intentionally” was removed from the rule relating to interference by a runner who had been declared out or who had

scored. Intent should not be the determining factor in ruling whether interference has occurred by a runner who has scored/been retired. The rule is now consistent with the definition of interference.

**Slide 15:** In the above illustrations: A: The batter pops up to the catcher for an out. B: The BR runs to first anyway, even though declared out. The catcher attempts to pick-off R1 at first, but the throw hits the BR in the back. This is interference by a retired runner. The runner closest to home (R1 in this case) is declared out.

From 2011 SB Case Book:

8.6.18 SITUATION: With R1 on first base and one out, B3 is at the plate with a 3-2 count. The pitch is swung at and missed. F2 drops the ball and B3 runs to first base even though first base is occupied. F2 throws the ball to first in an attempt to pick off R1, who is diving back to first base. The ball hits B3 in the back and ricochets into the dugout. RULING: With first base occupied and less than two outs, B3 is out on strike three. Therefore, she has interfered with F2's throw to first base. The ball is dead and R1 (the runner closest to home) is ruled out for the third out.

**Slide 17: ART. 1...**Gloves/mitts shall:

- a. Be a maximum of two colors excluding lacing and manufacturer's logo colors. Lacing shall not be the color of the ball.
- b. Not be entirely gray, white or optic in color.
- c. **Not have a gray, white or optic colored marking on the outside or inside that gives the appearance of the ball.**
- d. Be permitted to have one American flag not to exceed 2 inches by 3 inches.
- e. Not be judged as distracting by the umpire.

**ART. 2...**The catcher shall wear a glove/mitt of any size. Gloves/mitts shall be worn by all other fielders and conform to the following maximum specifications (See Figure 1-5):

- a. Height measured from the bottom edge or heel straight up across the center of the palm to a line even with the highest point of the glove/mitt: 14 inches
- b. Width of palm measured from the bottom edge of the webbing farthest from the thumb in a horizontal line to the outside of the little finger edge of the glove/mitt: 8 inches
- c. & d. Webbing measured across the top end, or along any line parallel to the top: 5¾ inches

**ART. 3 . . .** Gloves/mitts shall not be designed or altered to create an adhesive, sticky and/or tacky surface.

**ART. 4 . . .** An illegal glove/mitt shall be replaced immediately (8-8-15).

**Slide 18:** Any gray, white or optic-colored marking that gives the appearance of the ball is not permitted. The optic marking may be "blackened" with a marker to change the appearance.

**Slide 20: \*2.49 SITUATION B:** The bases are loaded with R1 on third, R2 on second and R3 on first and one out. B5 hits a fly ball into short right field that appears to drop in for a base hit, despite three fielders converging to try to make the catch. R1 crosses home plate and all the other runners hold close to their bases. For some reason, R1 decides to go back to third. None of the umpires signaled an out. The ball actually hit the ground without being caught. The defense throws the ball to the catcher who touches home plate. **RULING:** R1's advancement to home was legal. R1's run scores; bases remain loaded with one out. If the umpires deem that R1's act of retreating after touching home interferes with a defensive player's opportunity to make a play on another runner, the runner closest to home would be declared out, but R1's run would still count. (8-6-18)

**Slide 21: ART. 13 . . .** Hard and unyielding items (guards, casts, braces, splints, etc.) must be padded with a closed-cell, slow-recovery foam padding no less than ½" thick. Knee and ankle braces which are unaltered from the manufacturer's original design/production do not require any additional padding/covering.

**Slide 24:** Rock resin leaves a residue on the ball and shall not be used by pitchers.

**Slide 25: SECTION 5 BALL ROTATION**

**ART. 1 . . .** The pitcher has a choice of balls at the start of each half inning unless both balls do not get put into play. In that case, the pitcher in the bottom of the first inning must throw the unused ball. Thereafter, the ball in play should be returned to the 16-foot circle after every half inning.

**ART. 2 . . .** The pitcher may request the other ball before throwing a warm-up pitch by giving the ball in her possession to the plate umpire, the pitcher has now made a choice and must pitch that ball until such time as the ball goes out of play or becomes blocked.

**\*6.5.1 SITUATION:** Starting the bottom of the first inning, both game balls have been in play. The visiting pitcher (a) picks up the ball in the circle and pitches to the first batter; (b) asks to inspect both balls at the same time while in the circle; or (c) before throwing a warm-up pitch, tosses the ball from the circle to the umpire and requests the other ball. **RULING:** Legal in (a) and (c). Illegal in (b). **COMMENT:** After both balls have been used in the top of the first inning, either pitcher may exchange a ball from the circle at the beginning of each inning, but never have both balls at the same time. (6-5-2)

**Slide 27: 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.

**Slide 28: SPORTSMANSHIP**

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.

**Slide 29:** Music presentations should be neutral.

**Slide 31:** Umpires should check equipment prior to the contest. Bats should be free of rattles, dents, burrs, cracks and sharp edges.

**Slide 32:** 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.

**Slide 33:** Bat warmers alter the bat specifications and enhance performance – therefore, they are prohibited and render the bat illegal.

**Slide 34:** 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.

**Slide 35:** 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.

**Slide 36:** 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.

**Slide 37:** All high school softball fields used for competition should be properly maintained. This includes ensuring that the grass is well groomed and mowed to a proper height. The field should be level with no obstructions between the foul lines.

**Slide 38:** All lines should be white and properly marked. Notice the horizontal white line at fence level on the light pole which is in the field of play – any ball hitting above the white line would be considered out of play.

**Slide 39:** 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

**Slide 40:** Foul lines should extend to the outfield fence. When no fence is present, lines should extend to at least 185 feet into the outfield

**Slide 42:** 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.

**Slide 43:** 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.

**Slide 45:** 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.