



April 11, 2019

## NFHS Softball Weekly Rule Interpretations

**Situation 1:** With R1 on second base, B2 hits the ball toward F6, the ball gets past her and she turns to be in position to retrieve the ball from F7. As F6 turns toward the outfield, R1 is forced to run around her as she tries to advance to third base. F7 fields the ball and throws to F5 who tags R1 out on a close play at third base. **Ruling:** F6 is guilty of obstruction since she was not making an initial play on a batted ball nor did she have possession of the ball when she impeded R1's progress. The umpire should signal a delayed dead ball and verbalize obstruction when the obstruction occurred, once the obstructed runner is put out they should call and signal a dead ball and award R1 the base she would have received in their judgement had there been no obstruction, in this case most likely third base. (Rule 8-4-3b PENALTIES a)

**Situation 2:** With the outfield playing in, B1 hits a long fly ball that hits the fence in the air. As she rounds first base she is contacted by F3 who has moved toward the outfield watching F9 retrieve the ball who at this point has not reached the ball. The contact knocks both F3 and B1 to the ground, it takes some time for B1 and F3 to get untangled and B1 returns to first base since F9 is now throwing the ball to F4 at second base. The umpire signals a delayed dead ball and obstruction when F3 impedes B1's progress. At the end of the play the offensive coach asks if B1 is to be awarded second base and the umpire informs them that since B1 did not attempt to advance to second base by rule he cannot award them that base. **Ruling:** This is an incorrect ruling. Once a runner is obstructed the umpire has to judge what base that runner, and all other runners affected by the obstruction, would have reached had there been no obstruction. At the end of the playing action, if the obstructed runner has not obtained the base they would have reached had there not been obstruction, the umpire should award the base or bases they would have reached in their judgement, in this case most likely second base. (Rule 8-4-3b PENALTIES c)

**Situation 3:** With B2 at bat, R1 is leading off of first base and F2 throws to F3 for an attempted putout. As F3 is setting up for the throw she causes R1 to have to step around her to reach first base. The umpire verbalizes obstruction and signals a delayed dead ball. The first bases coach now instructs R1 to advance to second base. In (a) R1 is thrown out at second base. In (b) F3's throw is off line and R1 is safe at second base. **Ruling:** In (a) since R1 was obstructed between first and second base she cannot be called out between those two bases, unless she violates one of the exceptions listed, so R1 would be placed on the base she would have reached had there been no obstruction in this case most likely first base. In (b) R1's advance to second base is legal and she will remain on second base. (Rule 8-4-3b PENALTIES a)

**Situation 4:** With R1 on third base, B2 hits a ground ball to F4. R1 starts to advance and F4 holds the ball to keep them from advancing home. As B2 rounds first base, she collides with F3 who is standing on the corner of first base. F4 with the ball in hand runs B2 back to first base, then throws the ball to F5 at third base to make a play on the returning R1. The first base coach now tells B2 to advance to second base since she was obstructed between first and second base. F5 now throws to F4 who tags B2 out on a close play at second base. The umpire, who originally verbalized obstruction and signaled a delayed deal ball when F3 obstructed B2 now signals a dead ball and awards B2 second base. **Ruling:** This is an incorrect ruling. Once B2 reached the base she would have reached had there been no obstruction, in this case first base, and there was a subsequent play on another runner (throw to third base to play on R1) B2 is no longer protected between first and second base and if she is putout she will remain out. (Rule 8-4-3b PENALTIES a, EXCEPTIONS 1)

**Situation 5:** B1 hits a fly ball to center field that is dropped. As B1 is rounding first base she has to run around F3. The umpire verbalizes obstruction and signals a delayed dead ball, in their judgment B1 would have reached second base had there been no obstruction. B1 advances to second base, but her coach having seen the obstruction signals her to continue to third base where she is easily putout. The umpire calls B1 out at third base **Ruling:** This is a correct ruling. Since B1 advanced past the base she would have reached in the umpire's judgment had there not been obstruction, they are no longer protected and will be called out and the ball remains live. (Rule 8-4-3b PENALTIES b)

**Situation 6:** B1 sharply hits a ground ball to F6 who miss plays the ball and then makes a bad throw to F3 pulling them into the running lane where she impedes the progress of B1 running to first base, F3 continues and retrieving the ball tags B1 prior to reaching first base. The umpire calls B1 out, ruling that since F3 was in the act of fielding the thrown ball they are not guilty of obstruction. **Ruling:** This is an incorrect ruling, Rule 8-4-3b states that if a fielder impedes the progress of a runner when they are not in possession of the ball or not in the act of making an initial play on a batted ball they are guilty of obstruction. In this case the umpire should have verbalized obstruction and signaled a delayed dead ball when F3 impeded B1's progress. Once B1 was put out, they should have called a dead ball and awarded B1 first base.

**Situation 7:** With R1 on first base, B2 hits a ball to F4 who attempts to field it but fails to gain control of the ball that then passes them and is more than a step and a reach from the spot of the initial contact. R1 who was running behind F4 is now contacted by F4 as she is attempting to secure the loose ball. The umpire calls a dead ball and rules R1 out for interference. **Ruling:** This is an incorrect ruling, once the ball travels farther than a step and a reach from the original spot of contact the fielder is no longer considered to be making an initial play on a batted ball. By rule, if a defender is not in possession of the ball and are not making an initial play on a batted ball and they impede the runners progress, they are guilty of obstruction. In this case the proper mechanic would have been to verbalize obstruction and signal a delayed dead ball when F4 impeded R1's progress. (Rule 2-47-3c, 8-4-3b)



April 4, 2019

## NFHS Softball Weekly Rule Interpretations

**Situation 1:** B1 hits the ball and drops her bat into fair territory as she is heading to first base. The bat is stationary, and the ball has backspin and rolls into the stationary bat. **Ruling:** This is a live ball and contacting the bat has no bearing on the play. (Rule 1-8-3)

**Situation 2:** B1 bunts the ball and drops her bat in fair territory as she runs toward first base. The bat rolls into the ball that is stationary a foot into fair territory directly in front of home plate. **Ruling:** Dead ball, B1 is out. Any time the discarded bat hits the ball a second time on or over fair territory the batter is out. (Rule 7-4-13)

**Situation 3:** B1 bunts the ball and drops her bat in fair territory as she runs toward first base. The bat is rolling toward the ball and the ball is rolling toward the bat and they make contact in fair territory. **Ruling:** Dead ball, B1 is out. Any time the discarded bat hits the ball a second time on or over fair territory the batter is out. Even if both the bat and ball are both moving toward each other, if the bat is moving toward the ball when they contact the bat is considered to have hit the ball a second time and is a violation of Rule 7-4-13, resulting in a dead ball and the batter being called out.

**Situation 4:** B1 bunts the ball and drops her bat in foul territory, the bat is rolling toward the ball and the ball is rolling toward the bat and they make contact in foul territory with the bat stopping in foul territory but the ball rolling into fair territory where it is first touched by F5. **Ruling:** Once the ball hits the bat in foul territory it becomes a foul ball since the bat is an object foreign to the natural ground (Rule 2-25-1d), unless the umpire judges the batter dropped the bat in a means that prevented the ball from becoming a fair ball. (Rule 7-4-13)

**Situation 5:** R1 on first base, B2 is at bat with one out and a 1 ball 2 strike count. B2 swings and misses a ball that is in the dirt and F2 does not catch cleanly. B2, thinking it was a dropped third strike runs to first base and F2 throws the ball to first base to make a play on R1 who started to steal second base but was then trying to return to first base. The throw is on target and F3 receives the throw and tags R1 as she is sliding into first base. The base umpire calls R1 safe. The defensive coach wants interference on B2 as they felt she drew the throw continuing to run to first base when the dropped third strike was not in effect. **Ruling:** This is not correct. Rule 8-6-16c has an exception for a batter-runner running on a possible dropped third strike. Since B2 did not interfere with F2's play on R1 there is no interference on the play.

**Situation 6:** R1 on second base, B2 is at bat with one out and a 1 ball 2 strike count. B2 swings and misses a ball that is low but F2 catches in flight. B2, thinking it was a dropped third strike runs to first base and F2 throws the ball to first base, seeing the throw to first base R1 attempts to steal third base. The throw is on target and F3 receives the throw at first base, R1 is safe on third base. The defensive coach wants interference on B2 as they felt she drew the throw to first base by continuing to run to first base when the dropped third strike was not in effect. **Ruling:** This is not correct, Rule 8-6-16c has an exception for a batter-runner running on a possible dropped third strike and not being out merely for drawing a throw.

**Situation 7:** R1 on first base, B2 is at bat with one out and a 1 ball 2 strike count. B2 swings and misses a ball that is in the dirt and F2 does not catch cleanly. B2, thinking it was a dropped third strike runs to first base and F2 throws the ball to first base to make a play on R1 who started to steal second base but was then trying to return to first base. The throw hits B2 interfering with the attempted play on R1 returning to first base. **Ruling:** This is interference by a retired runner and the ball is dead and the runner closest to home, in this case R1, is out. Although Rule 8-6-16c has an exception for a batter-runner running on a possible dropped third strike drawing a throw, if they commit an act of interference as was the case in this play they are still guilty of interference.

**Situation 8:** R1 on second base, B2 is at bat with one out and a 1 ball 2 strike count. B2 swings and misses a ball that is low but F2 catches in flight. B2, thinking it was a dropped third strike runs to first base and F2 throws the ball to first base. Seeing the throw to first base R1 attempts to steal third base. The throw contacts B2 who does not do anything intentionally to interfere with the throw, very near first base and R1 is safe on third base. **Ruling:** Rule 8-6-16c has an exception for a batter-runner running on a possible dropped third strike and not being out merely for drawing a throw. Although the throw did hit B2, there was no play at first base for them to interfere with, so they are not guilty of interference in this situation.



March 27, 2019

## NFHS Softball Weekly Rule Interpretations

We have received a number of inquiries about properly enforcing the penalty for an illegal pitch and specifically when the Exceptions to the Penalty for Rule 6-1-1 apply. Exception 2 reads "If the batter does not reach first base safely or if any base runner fails to advance at least one base, the coach of the team at bat shall have the option of the result of the play or the penalty of the illegal pitch." This exception applies to all illegal pitches whether they are batted or ruled a ball or strike. It is imperative that the umpires continue to umpire the entire play through its completion including calling the pitch a ball or strike and ruling on any attempted advancement of runners. One discussion point was that the comments on this rule change stated that the rules committee felt that only the batter was placed at a

disadvantage by an illegal pitch so only the batter should receive a reward from the illegal pitch. Although this is true, the rules are also in place to ensure that any undue disadvantage is removed from an illegal pitch. For example, if the offense is planning a bunt and run situation and the pitcher throws an illegal pitch that the batter is not able to hit. The runner that is running expecting their batter to put the ball in play is placed at a disadvantage possibly resulting in their being put out on what now appears as a steal. As exception 2 above states, if any runner is put out on the pitch/play or the batter does not reach first base safely then the coach shall have the option of the penalty or the play. The following situations are designed to highlight the different situations where this issue may arise.

**Situation 1:** R1 on first base, B2 is at bat with a 1 ball 1 strike count. F1 is called for an illegal pitch that R1 attempts to steal second base on, B2 attempts to bunt the ball but does not make contact with the pitch and F2 throws R1 out at second base. **Ruling:** Since B2 did not reach first base safely, and R1 did not advance at least one base safely the offensive coach has the option of taking the penalty or the play. The play would result in R1 being out and B2 still at bat with a 1 ball 2 strike count. The penalty would place R1 back on first base and have B2 at bat with a 2 ball 1 strike count.

**Situation 2:** R1 on first base, B2 is at bat with a 1 ball 1 strike count. F1 is called for an illegal pitch that R1 attempts to steal second base on, B2 attempts to bunt the ball but does not make contact with the pitch and F2 throws in an attempt to retire R1 but R1 is ruled safe at second base. **Ruling:** Since B2 did not reach first base safely, the offensive coach has the option of taking the penalty or the play. The play would result in R1 on second base and B2 still at bat with a 1 ball 2 strike count. The penalty would place R1 back on first base and have B2 at bat with a 2 ball 1 strike count.

**Situation 3:** R1 on third base, B2 is at bat with a 1 ball 1 strike count. F1 is called for an illegal pitch that R1 attempts to steal home on, B2 attempts to bunt the ball but does not make contact with the pitch and F2 misses the pitch allowing R1 to score. **Ruling:** Since B2 did not reach first base safely, the offensive coach has the option of taking the penalty or the play. The play would result in R1 scoring and B2 still at bat with a 1 ball 2 strike count. The penalty would place R1 back on third base and have B2 at bat with a 2 ball 1 strike count.

**Situation 4:** R1 on third base, B2 is at bat with a 1 ball 1 strike count. F1 is called for an illegal pitch that R1 attempts to steal home on, B2 attempts to bunt the ball but does not make contact with the pitch and F2 tags R1 out attempting to score. **Ruling:** Since B2 did not reach first base safely and R1 did not advance at least one base safely, the offensive coach has the option of taking the penalty or the play. The play would result in R1 being out and B2 still at bat with a 1 ball 2 strike count. The penalty would place R1 back on third base and have B2 at bat with a 2 ball 1 strike count.

**Situation 5:** R1 on first base, B2 is at bat with a 1 ball 1 strike count. F1 is called for an illegal pitch that R1 attempts to steal second base on, B2 makes no attempt to contact the pitch that the umpire rules a ball and F2 throws R1 out at second base. **Ruling:** Since B2 did not reach first base safely, and R1 did not advance at least one base safely the offensive coach has the option of taking the penalty or the play. The play would result in R1 being out and B2 still at bat with a 2 ball 1 strike count. The penalty would place R1 back on first base and have B2 at bat with a 2 ball 1 strike count.

**Situation 6:** R1 on first base, B2 is at bat with a 1 ball 1 strike count. F1 is called for an illegal pitch that R1 attempts to steal second base on, B2 makes no attempt to contact the pitch that the umpire rules a ball and F2 throws in an attempt to retire R1 but R1 is ruled safe at second base. **Ruling:** Since B2 did not reach first base safely, the offensive coach has the option of taking the penalty or the play. The play would result in R1 being on second base and B2 still at bat with a 2 ball 1 strike count. The penalty would place R1 back on first base and have B2 at bat with a 2 ball 1 strike count.

**Situation 7:** R1 on first base, B2 is at bat with a 1 ball 1 strike count. F1 is called for an illegal pitch that R1 attempts to steal second base on, B2 makes no attempt to contact the pitch that the umpire rules a strike and F2 throws in an attempt to retire R1 but R1 is ruled safe at second base. **Ruling:** Since B2 did not reach first base safely, the offensive coach has the option of taking the penalty or the play. The play would result in R1 being on second base and B2 still at bat with a 1 ball 2 strike count. The penalty would place R1 back on first base and have B2 at bat with a 2 ball 1 strike count.



March 19, 2019

## NFHS Softball Weekly Rule Interpretations

**Situation:** With R1 at second base, R2 at first base and B3 at bat, the offensive coach reports to the plate umpire that he wants to enter S2 to run for R2. As the coach and umpire are reviewing the change on their respective lineup cards, the substitute enters the game but mistakenly replaces R1, a starter who was previously substituted for and then re-entered earlier in the game. The plate umpire reports the change to the opposing head coach with nobody noticing that S2 has taken the incorrect position. On the next pitch, the ball eludes the catcher and both runners advance. The offensive head coach, in the third-base coaches box now realizes that S2 actually replaced R1 instead of R2. Realizing the mistake, the offensive coach approaches the umpire, at the same time the defensive coach also asks for time to check the lineup as they realized the incorrect player is now on third base. **Ruling:** S2 would be considered an illegal substitute since they are occupying the incorrect position in the lineup and they are also in the game at the same time as the starter in their position (S2 and R2 are on the field at the same time). The correct penalty for this play should be S2 is called out and is restricted to the bench/dugout for the remainder of the game. Since S2 was reported into the game for R2 and has just been called out, R2 should be removed from the base. R1 would be returned to second base. Since S2 was reported for R2, R1 is still the active player in that lineup position and her reentry status would not be affected by this play. R1 would also not be out for abandoning her base as she did not abandon it, she had a player running in her position.

**Situation:** In the third inning S1, an eligible substitute, enters the game for F9 but is not reported to the plate umpire. B1 hits a fly ball that S1 catches in the air for an out. The defensive coach requests that the out be nullified since S1 is not legally in the game. **Ruling:** The out stands, S1 is legally in the game and the defensive team receives a warning for the unreported substitute. The next violation for an unreported substitute will result in the player and the head coach being restricted to the dugout/bench area for the remainder of the game.

**Situation:** In the top of the second inning S1 enters to run for B1 who is playing second base (F4), in the bottom of the inning B1 reenters and plays defense. In the bottom of the fifth inning S1 enters the game unreported reaching the centerfield position, where B4 has been playing. The next batter hits a long fly ball that is caught by S1 in centerfield. The offensive coach then approaches the umpire noting that S1 was never reported as a substitute.

**Ruling:** S1 is an illegal substitute as they have entered the game in a different position in the lineup, originally as B1 and now in B4's position. S1 shall be restricted to the dugout/bench area for the remainder of the game and since the infraction was discovered before another pitch was thrown, the offensive coach has the option of taking the result of the play or nullifying the out and returning their batter to bat with the same count.

**Situation:** In the top of the third inning Team B's S1 enters for B2, who is playing centerfield, and hits a home run. In the bottom of the inning B2 reenters to play defense. In the sixth inning S1 takes F4's position, where B6 has been playing defense. F1 throws a strike to Team A's first batter and the ball gets away from F1 with S1 retrieving the ball and returning it to F1. Team A's coach requests that the pitch be canceled since S1 is an illegal substitute and she handled the ball on the pitch. **Ruling:** Since the ball that was handled by the illegal substitute did not lead to a runner being put out or alter the play, all play stands, and the illegal substitute is restricted to the dugout/bench.



March 12, 2019

## NFHS Softball Weekly Rule Interpretations

**SITUATION 1:** B3 bats and hits a double bringing B4 up to the plate with no outs. In (a) the defensive coach requests that B4 be intentionally walked. In (b) the pitcher requests that B4 be intentionally walked. **RULING:** In both (a) and (b), the proper mechanic for an umpire any time a defensive coach or player wishes to intentionally walk a player is once he/she ensures all playing action is completed, signal and call time. Once the ball is dead, allow the coach or player to make the request to intentionally walk B4. **Note:** It is good practice in (b) to delay slightly when a player requests an intentional walk to ensure the defensive coach is in agreement prior to awarding the intentional walk. Once an intentional walk is awarded by the umpire it is final and cannot be reversed.

**SITUATION 2:** With no outs, a 1 ball 1 strike count and R1 on first base, the pitcher is called for an illegal pitch. B2 swings and misses the ball. R1 who was stealing on the pitch is thrown out at second base. The umpire rules that since R1 was stealing on the pitch she would remain out but awards the batter a ball for the illegal pitch. **RULING:** This is an incorrect ruling. Since the batter was not safe at first base and all runners did not advance at least one base on an illegal pitch, the offensive coach should receive his/her choice of the play or the penalty (6-1-1 PENALTY EXCEPTION 2). In this case the result of the play would be B2 at bat with a 1 ball 2 strike count and R1 remaining out. If the coach would like to take the penalty, a ball is awarded to B2 (2 ball 1 strike count) and R1 would be returned to first base.

**SITUATION 3:** With R1 on second base and no outs, F1 is called for an illegal pitch that B2 hits to the outfield. R1 scores on the play and B2 is safe on second base but misses first base on her way to second base. After the play is over the defensive coach appeals that B2 missed first base and the base umpire rules B2 out for missing first base. The offensive coach argues that they should be allowed to take the penalty for the illegal pitch since B2 was not safe at first base. **RULING:** NFHS rules state that once a runner has passed a base she is considered to have touched that base until properly appealed. Once B2 passed first base and R1 had advanced safely to third base the illegal pitch was cancelled (6-1-1 EXCEPTION 1). The intent of the illegal pitch penalty is to adequately offset the possible disadvantage she encountered due to the illegal pitch. It is not intended to allow the offense to subsequently break other rules, such as missing a base. Just as the NFHS obstruction rule is designed to protect the obstructed runner and award the bases she would have reached had there not been obstruction (remove the disadvantage of being obstructed) it too does not allow the runner to break other rules. There are exceptions listed in the obstruction rule that specifically state an obstructed runner would be called out if she missed a base or left before a fly ball was first touched (if properly appealed) and if she passed another runner, to name a few (Rule 8-4-3b PENALTY A, EXCEPTIONS).

**SITUATION 4:** With no outs, R1 on third base and R2 on first base, B3 is at bat with a 3 ball 1 strike count. The umpire calls an illegal pitch that B3 swings and misses. R2 was stealing second base on the pitch and is thrown out at second base but R1 is safe stealing home. The umpire rules that since R1 advanced safely the illegal pitch is nullified, R1 scores, R2 is out at second and B3 remains at bat with a 3 ball 2 strike count. **RULING:** This is an incorrect ruling. Since the batter was not safe at first base and all runners did not advance at least one base on an illegal pitch the offensive coach should receive their choice of the play or the penalty (6-1-1 PENALTY EXCEPTION 2). In this case the result of the play would be R1 scores, R2 is out and B3 remains at bat with a 3 ball 2 strike count with 1 out. If the coach would like to take the penalty, a ball is awarded to B3 which would result in ball 4, placing B3 on first base forcing R2 to advance to second base and R1 would return to third base.



March 4, 2019

## NFHS Softball Weekly Rule Interpretations

**SITUATION 1:** B2 bats in place of B1 and obtains a double. B3 then comes to bat and as she is walking to the plate the defensive coach request time and informs the plate umpire that he wants to intentionally walk B3. After B3 is awarded first base but before a pitch is thrown to B4, the defensive coach again approaches the plate umpire and appeals that B2 batted out of order. **RULING:** Once B3 is intentionally walked, there can be no appeal of an infraction that occurred prior to the intentional walk being granted by the umpire. In this case the intentional walk to B3 would legalize B2's at bat and the next proper batter would be B4.

**SITUATION 2:** B3 bats and advances to second base, however, she misses first base on her way to second. B4 then comes to bat and as she is walking to the plate the defensive coach request time and informs the plate umpire that he wants to intentionally walk B4. After B4 is awarded first base but before a pitch is thrown to B5, the defensive coach again approaches the plate umpire and appeals that B3 missed first base. **RULING:** Once B4 is intentionally walked, there can be no appeal of an infraction that occurred prior to the intentional walk being granted by the umpire. In this case the intentional walk to B4 would remove the defenses chance to appeal B3 missing first base.

**SITUATION 3:** B5 bats and advances to second base, however, she misses first base on her way to second. B6 should be the next proper batter, however, B7 comes to bat. As she is walking to the plate the defensive coach request time and informs the plate umpire that he wants to intentionally walk B7. After B7 is awarded first base but before a pitch is thrown to B8, the defensive coach again approaches the plate umpire and appeals that B7 has batted out of order. **RULING:** B6, the player who should have batted, would be ruled out and B7 would be removed from first base and would be the next proper batter. Once B7 was intentionally walked, there can be no appeal of an infraction that occurred prior to the intentional walk. The defense could no longer appeal B5 missing first base, but they can still appeal B7 batting out of order until a pitch (legal or illegal) or an intentional walk has been awarded to the next batter.

**SITUATION 4:** An offensive coach approaches an umpire and is concerned that the defensive coach might intentionally walk a player to remove their ability to appeal a previous play. **RULING:** All appeal plays, listed below under Rule 2-1-2, are designed to catch an infraction by the offense and obtain an out for the defense. There are no plays that an intentional walk could remove an opportunity from the offense.

### Rule 2-1-2

**ART. 2 . . .** Types of appeals:

- a. Missing a base, either advancing or returning (live or dead-ball appeal);
- b. Leaving a base on a caught fly ball before the ball is first touched (live or dead-ball appeal);
- c. Batting out of order (dead-ball appeal only);
- d. Attempting to advance to second base after making the turn at first base overrunning first base (live-ball appeal only).