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TO: CIF Commissioners, Softball Coaches, Officials and Administrators

FROM: Vince Rosse, CIF State Rules' Interpreter

In addition to the notes below, please consult the Points of Emphasis section ( pp. 83-84 of the 2003 NFHS Softball Rules Book) and the Comments on the 2003 Rules Revisions (pp. 82-83 of the 2003 NFHS Softball Rules Book).

## **RULES CHANGES FOR 2003**

### **1. Catcher's Helmet/Masks (1-1-7)**

Beginning January 1, 2003, the NOCSAE standard for a catcher's headgear is in effect. The NOCSAE standard for a catcher's helmet and mask only applies to products where the helmet and face guard (mask) are attached together by some means, either permanent means or something as simple as Velcro. It is not possible for a catcher's face guard (mask) or a catcher's helmet to be NOCSAE tested and certified as individual units. If however these individual units are used together in a combination intended by the manufacturer(s), they have to be tested together to the NOCSAE standard in that combination in order to be legal. Remember the face guard (mask) portion must attach to the helmet, and only the helmets will have the NOCSAE stamp. It will be virtually impossible for umpires on the field to determine if different manufactured components have been tested and certified together.

If a school is using a catcher's face guard (mask) and helmet from different manufacturers, it is the duty of the head coach to provide written documentation verifying the legality of that combination in question. The written verification shall include a statement indicating that the individually manufactured components of the combination have been tested and certified together as called for in the standard.

Any helmet and mask combination that has been manufactured together as a single unit (hockey style helmets) and has been certified to meet the NOCSAE standard will have their stamp on it. Umpires can then tell if it is a legal helmet by the identifying stamp. If in the umpire's judgment, the throat protection **DOES NOT** extend far enough to protect the catcher, a throat protector would be required. It is recommended that the team have a throat protector available at every game.

It is expected that the proper catcher helmet and face guard (mask) be worn during practice, warm-ups and the game.

**Manufacturer Certifies**



## 2. Ball Slips from the Pitcher's Hand (6-2-6)

Last year this play was not considered a pitch and a "ball" was declared. It is now considered a "pitch" and the batter has an opportunity to swing at the ball. The ball must be in the general area of home plate so that the batter has a legal opportunity to hit the ball.

If the batter has a legitimate opportunity to hit the ball and swings at the pitch, a strike is called if she does not make contact. If batted, the ball is in play.

If the batter has no legitimate opportunity to hit the ball, a defensive player may immediately retrieve the ball.

**Scenario #1:** No runners on base and the batter has two strikes on her. The ball slips from the pitcher's hand and rolling in a direction where the batter **DOES NOT** have a legitimate opportunity to hit the ball. The batter realizing that she has two strikes on her swings and misses for a dropped strike three. She then proceeds towards 1<sup>st</sup> base. **Ruling:** Time is to be called and the batter is declared out. She is violating the spirit of the rule and we want to stop all action on the play so no player is hurt.

**Scenario #2:** Runner(s) on base, two outs and the batter has two strikes on her. The ball slips from the pitcher's hand and rolling in a direction where the batter **DOES NOT** have a legitimate opportunity to hit the ball. The batter realizing that she has two strikes on her swings and misses for a dropped strike three. She then proceeds towards 1<sup>st</sup> base. **Ruling:** Time is to be called and the batter is declared out. She is violating the spirit of the rule and we want to stop all action on the play so no player is hurt.

If there are runners on base and there are less than two outs, time is not called and the defense has the opportunity to gain additional outs on the play. At the end of the play, the batter will be declared out.

## 3. Umpire Uniform (10-4-2 NOTE)

The rule has been removed from the "State Adoption" section of the rulebook and is now a standardized rule for all states. It was the belief of National Federation that there needed to set standard for the uniform of the umpires.

The uniform shall consist of: powder blue shirt (pullover or button), heather grey slacks, fitted navy blue cap, and heather grey ball bag. Shoes and belt shall be black. Socks may be black or navy blue. A t-shirt if worn shall be white and short sleeve.

### **MAJOR EDITORIAL CHANGES FOR 2003**

#### 1. "Permanent" instead of "embossed" (1-1-6)

The wording has been changed in the book regarding the NOCSAE emblem that needs to be on the batter's helmet and the catcher's facemask / helmet.

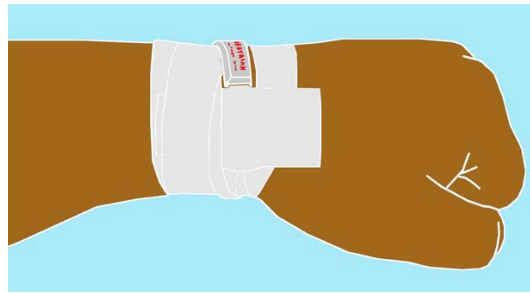
Either the embossed stamp or a permanent sticker is legal. A permanent sticker is defined not easily removed to put on another helmet. If an umpire is able to easily peel the sticker off, the helmet shall be declared illegal.

Additionally, the batter's helmet needs to have the permanent warning label attached to the outside of the helmet. The most common position is on the rear of the helmet. A warning label under the brim of the helmet is **NOT** legal.

#### 2. Medical and Religious medals (1-1-9)

Religious and medical-alert medals are not considered jewelry. If the player is wearing a religious medal, then it must be taped and worn under the uniform and it is **NOT** visible.

If the player is wearing a medical-alert medal, it must be taped and it **MAY** be visible. However, if the exposed part of the medal is deemed to be dangerous by the umpire, it must be covered. It is recommended that the team carry clear tape with them to cover the medal.



### 3. Collapsible Fence (2-10-1)

A standard was needed to specify what would constitute a legal catch when the fielder is in contact with the fence.

- ⇒ If the fence is **COMPLETELY** horizontal – **NOT A CATCH**
- ⇒ If there is any degree of verticality – Legal catch

If however the fence falls forward into the field of play, it would be a legal catch even if the fence is completely horizontal.



### 4. Jumping, Hurdling or Leaping the Fielder (8-6-10 note)

Jumping, hurdling and leaping are all legal attempts to avoid a fielder only if the fielder is lying on the ground. To be lying on the ground, the fielder needs to be in the prone position.

### 5. Collapsible Fence (2-10-1)

A standard was needed to specify what would constitute a legal catch when the fielder is in

## POINTS OF EMPHASIS FOR 2003

#### 1. Pitching (Crow Hop and Leap)

##### Crow Hop

A crow hop is defined as a replant of the pivot foot prior to releasing the ball by:

- a. sliding the foot in front of the pitching plate;
- b. lifting the pivot foot and stepping forward;
- c. jumping forward with the pivot foot off the pitching plate prior to starting the pitch:

To help determine if the pivot foot has been replanted:

- a. Find the pivot foot when the hands separate to start the pitch;
- b. If the pivot foot is off and in front of the pitching plate before the hands separate to start the pitch...a crow hop has occurred.

## Leap

A leap is when:

- a. both feet are airborne by the pitcher prior to releasing the ball.
- b. The pivot foot must stay in contact with the ground as it drags away from the pitching plate until the lead foot touches the ground.

## 2. Sporting Behavior

Values of interscholastic competition are based on sporting behavior and fair play. Coaches, players and officials are expected to adhere to and are entrusted with these values. Behaviors and strategies should be within the rules of the game and always reflect the spirit of fair play.

### **BAT STANDARD FOR 2003**

#### 1. NFHS Bat Standard Rule

ALL bats must meet the ASA Bat Performance Standard and be labeled with the permanent ASA approved certification mark.



There have been bat models containing the certification mark that have been found out of compliance with the ASA Bat Performance Standards. Noncompliant bat models coming into compliance by the manufacturer will be authorized to bear the ASA recertification mark.



All bats for NFHS play must have either the permanent ASA certification mark or the permanent recertification mark. Some bats will have both marks. For information on returning the bats for recertification, go to the manufacture's website for details. **It is important to periodically check the ASA website for an updated list of the banned bats.**

## **SITUATION PLAYS**

1. B1 hits the ball towards 1<sup>st</sup> base. F2, in advance of B1, is standing partially outside the first base foul line attempting to field the ball which is in fair territory. B1 contacts F2 in foul territory. What is your ruling?

**RULING:** Interference on B1. An immediate dead ball is called and B1 is declared out. (2-32; 8-6-10a)

2. Jones (the pitcher) gets a hit in the 2<sup>nd</sup> inning. After reaching 1<sup>st</sup> base, Brown is used as a courtesy runner for Jones. In the next half inning Jones returns to pitch, but after one batter switches defensive positions with the 1<sup>st</sup> base player. Brown enters the game as a substitute for Smith in the 4<sup>th</sup> inning. What is your ruling?

**RULING:** Legal. (8-9)

3. F1 begins her pitching motion, she then lifts her pivot foot off the pitching plate and immediately returns in to the pitching plate as she begins and completes her delivery with the batter taking the pitch. What is your ruling?

**RULING:** Illegal pitch. The ball is dead at the end of playing action. A ball is called on the batter and base runners are awarded one base. (6-1-2c; 6-2-3 Exc)

4. The batter slaps a ball into the air above home plate. Although the ball does not go above the batters head, the catcher is able to lunge forward and make the catch What is your ruling?

**RULING:** Legal catch, batter is out. (2-1-2; 2-10-1; 2-20-1a)

5. Prior to the game, the umpires are checking the batting helmets of team A. Some of the helmets have on them a sticker indicating they meet the NOCSAE standard. Other helmets have an embossed NOCSAE seal.. What is your ruling?

**RULING:** Provided the stickers are permanent, all helmets are legal. (1-1-6)

6. Prior to the game, the umpires are checking the batting helmets of team A. All of the helmets have either an embossed NOCSAE seal or ONOCSAE permanent sticker/seal. However, some helmets do not have a legible warning label. What is your ruling?

**RULING:** Legible exterior warning labels are mandatory of all batting helmets. Those helmets without legible warning labels shall be prohibited for use in the contest. (1-1-6)

7. In checking team A's equipment prior to the game, a catcher's helmet without the attached facemask is presented for inspection. The helmet does have a NOCSAE permanent seal. A face mask manufactured by a company other than the one which manufactured the catcher's helmet is presented for inspection. What is your ruling?

**RULING:** This specific helmet/mask combination would be prohibited for use unless the coach has documentation from one of the respective manufacturers indicating that these two pieces of equipment have been tested together and meet NOCSAE specifications. (1-1-7)

8. Prior to the game the umpires are inspecting Team A's bats. During their inspection bats are discovered that do not have the embossed ASA approved certification mark. What is your ruling?

**RULING:** The bats shall be prohibited for use during the contest. (1-3-5)

9. With R1 on 3<sup>rd</sup> base, B2 receives ball four. F2 immediately returns the ball to F1 in the 16-foot circle. B1 runs towards 1<sup>st</sup> base but stops prior to reaching the base to try to force a play by F1:
- F1 does not make a play on B2. What is your ruling?
  - F1 makes a throw towards 1<sup>st</sup> base. What is your ruling?

**RULING:**

- B2 is expected to run to 1<sup>st</sup> base without hesitation. Time is called by the umpire and B2 is instructed to take her place on 1<sup>st</sup> base.
  - The ball is live when F1 throws the ball to 1<sup>st</sup> base. B2 is still entitled to 1<sup>st</sup> base without liability to be put out. (2-63-1; 8-7-1)
10. With R1 on 2<sup>nd</sup> base and R2 on 1<sup>st</sup> base and a 1-1 count on the batter, the offensive coach requests time to speak with the runner s and batter. When the players return to their bases, R1 and R2 have switched bases. After the next pitch to B3, the defensive coach asks for time and appeals to the umpire that the runners are on the wrong base. What is your ruling?

**RULING:** The umpire shall rule both R1 and R2 out for switching bases. Both are guilty of running infraction. R1 ran the bases in reverse order and R2 passed a preceding runner. If, in the umpires judgment, the act was deliberate, both players and the coach would be ejected for unsporting behavior. (3-3-1o#3; 8-3-6; 8-6-4; 10-2-3f)