



# NEWS RELEASE

FEDERATION OF STATE HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

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## Two Changes Made in High School Softball Rules

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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INDIANAPOLIS, IN (July 23, 2002) — The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Softball Rules Committee made two significant rules changes during its annual meeting June 2-3 in Indianapolis, Indiana, including a clarification of Rule 6-2-6.

The change in Rule 6-2-6 explains that when a ball slips from the pitcher's hand, the batter may legally swing if the ball has an opportunity to be struck. Before the change, the rule stated that the pitch was automatically called a "ball," even if the batter swung at it. This could come into play if a batter has two strikes, fewer than two outs, and no one occupying first base. The batter could swing and try to advance to first base.

"Basically, we had to add the language, because it was possible that the batter might have an opportunity to swing," said Mary Struckhoff, assistant director of the NFHS and liaison to the NFHS Softball Rules Committee. "But, it happens so infrequently, it was just a matter of tidying up."

In addition to the above changes, the committee, which is composed of a voting member from each of the eight NFHS sections, a National Federation Coaches Association (NFCA) representative, a National Federation Officials Association (NFOA) representative, and committee chairperson Rocky Arrington, deleted some unnecessary wording.

Last year, the NFHS Board of Directors asked that Rule 10-4-2 Note be revisited because there was an inconsistency in umpires' uniforms. The Softball Rules Committee erased the note, which formerly permitted each state to determine umpire uniforms.

In addition to the two above rule changes, the committee made seven major editorial changes. The last sentence in Rule 7-1-2b Exception was deleted, because the statement was confusing and is explained thoroughly in Rules 7-1-2c and 7-1-2d. "Effects" also will be added to this article to help clarify the rule.

Another simple change in wording cleared up the confusion in Rule 1-1-6. It formerly stated that a batting helmet must bear an “embossed” National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE) stamp; now the wording has been changed to a “permanent” stamp.

“In this rule, we basically righted a wrong from last year,” Arrington said. “Now, the wording is consistent with NOCSAE standards.”

In Rule 8-6-10, a note was added to clarify that a base runner can jump, hurdle or leap a fielder only if the fielder is on the ground. This wording was inadvertently left out when the rule was rewritten last year.

Other editorial changes include:

- The middle paragraph of Rule 1-4-2 was changed to “... or have the entire play nullified,” this took the place of “or having the award for use of an illegal glove or mitt imposed.” The change made the wording consistent with Rule 8-8-15.
- Rule 2-10-1 has been altered to describe that any a catch made over a fence of any degree of verticality is considered legal. The fence simply may not be completely horizontal.
- Several areas in Rule 7 were edited to include the word “effects.”
- The “Suggested Double First Base Rules” section was removed from the back of the book. Rules for utilizing the double first base are now included in Rule 8.

Although not implemented as a rules change, state associations will be encouraged to experiment during the 2003 season with the “designated player” rule. In states that elect to experiment, this would replace the “designated hitter” rule.

“Many participants and umpires are probably used to it from participating in Amateur Softball Association (ASA) contests. So, it is not completely new to players and umpires. However, many coaches and administrators would not be familiar with the provisions.”

Struckhoff added: “The rules committee encourages states to experiment with the designated player rule because it appears to be a good softball rule, worthy of possible inclusion as an NFHS softball playing rule. We simply need more information from the NFHS softball family. Both the ASA and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) have had the designated player rule in their codes for more than 10 years. All the things that can be done under the designated hitter rule can be done with the designated player rule, but it allows coaches more flexibility in their defenses, while not having to use as many official entries. States experimenting with this rule will be able to provide the committee with important feedback.”

Fast pitch softball is the fourth-most popular sport for girls at the high school level with 350,197 participants during the 2000-01 season, according to the High School Athletics Participation Survey conducted by the NFHS. It also ranks fourth in school sponsorship with 12,947 schools offering the sport. In addition, 2,350 boys in 87 schools across the country participated in fast pitch softball during the 2000-01 season.

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