

Softball Points of Emphasis - 2022

By NFHS on September 07, 2021

softball

HUDDLES BETWEEN INNINGS

If a team chooses to huddle on the field after a third out while the other team is warming up, care should be taken to ensure they do so in a safe location. In between innings as the defensive team takes the field and begins to throw the ball, the offensive team should only huddle in an area that does not impede the warm-up of the defensive team nor places them in areas where overthrows are likely. Huddling should be limited to the amount of time needed for the defensive players to make their warm-up throws, during the one minute permitted by rule. Huddling in appropriate areas will assist with minimizing risk to participants.

GUIDANCE FOR PITCHER UTILIZATION

The past several years have seen an increasing concern regarding overuse injuries of the shoulder and elbow among softball pitchers at the high school level. The NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC) and the NFHS Softball Rules Committee continue to monitor injury rates of high school softball players through the National High School Sports-Related Injury Surveillance Study [High School Reporting Online (RIO)], which is an annual collection of injuries experienced while participating in high school sports. The injury data are presented to the NFHS Softball Rules Committee each year and reviewed when applicable to rule proposals.

At this point in time, the available injury data do not warrant the implementation of pitch or inning limitations for high school softball. Proper technical, mental, nutritional and physical training before, during and after pitching with appropriate rest and recovery time are important components in the development of a softball pitcher, from youth through high school. The development of multiple pitchers on a team will help share the pitching load as well.

The NFHS Softball Rules Committee and the NFHS SMAC will continue to monitor RIO and other available research regarding shoulder and elbow injury risk for high school softball pitchers.

ASSISTING A RUNNER

To score a run, the runner must legally advance to and touch first, second, third and then home plate. Coaches or any other team personnel are not permitted to assist a runner in any manner during playing action. When a home run occurs, although the ball is out of play (enters dead-ball territory), runners have live-ball running responsibilities and are still required to legally run the bases. If someone other than another runner physically assists a runner, the assisted runner is ruled out. Similarly, if the runner passes

another runner they would be ruled out. Lastly, if the runner misses a base and it is properly appealed, the runner would also be ruled out.

PITCHER SIMULATING TAKING A SIGN

While the pivot foot is in contact with the pitcher's plate and prior to bringing the hands together the pitcher must take or simulate taking a signal from the catcher. A signal may be taken from a coach either by hand signal, verbal call, or by looking up on a wristband with a playbook/playcard. This signal can be taken while in contact with the pitcher's plate or while standing behind the pitcher's plate prior to taking a position in contact with the pitcher's plate. None of these actions are illegal by rule; the only requirement is that no matter where or from whom the actual signal is obtained, the pitcher must take a position with the pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate with the hands separated and simulate taking a signal from the catcher. Requiring the pitcher to take their position in contact with the pitching plate and simulating taking a signal from the catcher prior to bringing their hands together allows the batter to prepare themselves for the start of the pitch. If the pitcher does not pause after stepping onto the pitcher's plate to simulate taking a signal from the catcher prior to bring their hands together, an illegal pitch should be called.