

2018 NFHS BASEBALL

RULE CHANGES

There were 12 rule change proposals facing the committee this year, the least number in over six years. The game of baseball at the high school level is in great shape, with increased participation by the student athletes and also increased number of schools sponsoring the sport.

Of the 12 rule proposals, four were passed with only 1 having an impact on play for 2018.

What was passed:

1) A modification to 1-3-1. A change to the wording stated: The ball shall be a sphere formed by yarn and covered with two strips of white horsehide stitched together. It shall be 5 to 5.25 ounces in weight and have circumference of 9 to 9.25 inches. The Coefficient of Restitution (COR) of baseballs shall not exceed .555. The ball shall meet the current NOCSAE standard for baseballs. (*Effective January 1, 2019*). A minimum of three...

Impact to umpires – very little, except in 2018 inspecting the baseballs given to them to ensure the proper ball is being used (must have the NFHS Authentication Mark). There are 14 companies licensed to make NFHS baseballs; none are made in the US.

2) Rule 1-3-2a2: A modification regarding the components of a bat. “Not have exposed rivets, pins, rough or sharp edges or any form of exterior fastener or attachment(s) that would present a potential hazard.”

Impact to umpires: Currently the Lock-n-Load, which is a legal bat and will be grandfathered to remain a legal bat, has a pin allowing changes to the bat in weight. This change prevents and prohibits other similar type bat changes from being legal for NFHS.

3) Rule 1-5-3: “The catcher shall wear, in addition to a head protector, a mask with a throat protector, body/chest protector that meets the NOCSAE standard (*effective January 1, 2020*), protective cup (male only), and baseball protective shin guards.

NOCSAE had developed a standard designed to protect the heart and the cardiac silhouette from commotio cordis. This is giving the manufacturers two plus years to have a usable model for competition.

Impact to umpires: Little to none. Coach must verify that the players are wearing proper equipment. This requirement will minimize injury and deaths for players, which is a good change.

4) This is the only rule change that impacts play for the 2018 season: Rule 8-2-7 – The verbiage “*A player who is awarded first base on a base on ball does not have this right*” has been **deleted** from the rule. The rule now reads: “A batter-runner who reaches first base safely and then over runs or over slides may immediately return without liability of being put out provided he does not attempt or feint an advance to second.”

Impact to umpires: Little to none. Now any runner reaching first, even on ball four or an intentional walk, may over run or over slide without risk of being put out provided he simply moves to return to first with no attempt or feint of an advance to second.

This is a good change that relieves the issue in this play: A BR has a 3-2 count on a check swing with the catcher dropping the ball. The BR can't afford to wait for the home plate umpire to check with the base umpire so he immediately runs for second, not knowing if it is ball four or a dropped third strike. If the check to the base umpire is that he did not go, he is advancing on ball four but may not be able to slow his advance to first in time to prevent his over running the base, which puts him at great risk to be put out. Now all batters are treated equally and doesn't put umpires in the spotlight for jeopardizing batter-runners.

OTHER ISSUES of IMPORTANCE

Wearable Technology and Smart bats/baseballs

More and more companies are coming forward with electronic wearables and smart technology to attach to a bat or a baseball and even a glove. Sensors may be attached on the end of the knob of the bat, “tattoo” technology where small and not noticeable sensors are placed on game implements or in cloth, etc. Issues are safety, equipment alteration, privacy, durability. These items will measure swing speed, time to contact, swing direction, speed, etc. This will not go away and more will be coming. As of now, what is used in practice is up to the coach. There is nothing approved for competition play.

Sports Medicine and Baseball

There were 143 injuries reported in 15-16, with 81 being in competition. This injury rate, 0.84, is down from previous years. Strains and sprain are still the number one injury. Arm and elbow injuries did increase.

Most injuries occurred in the 4th inning, and in practice most injuries occurred after an hour and a half. Baseball has the lowest concussion rate of sport with fielding being the largest component. There were 2 deaths in baseball last year; both were pre-existing medical conditions.