

My apologies for not getting this posted sooner. As you may know, we have been 'on the road' conducting our annual "Discussion Meetings" related to upcoming Referendum voting by member schools to changes in the OHSAA's Constitution and Bylaws. With Tournament draws Sunday, there are some important items listed here for coaches.

Jerry Snodgrass, Ass't. Commissioner

"27 on 23"

Ironically, with the great weather we have had since the beginning of the season, the only 'bad' weather has generally been on Saturdays during the baseball season. This brings some tough scheduling issues. You have a non-league DH on Saturday, rain washes it out. Basically, you have 2 games on 1 date washed out and you'd like to make the games up; maybe not against the same team but at least the games. And there is where the scheduling issue comes up because you are permitted 27 games but only on 23 total dates. Since you are basically 'out of Saturdays' to use, you can't make up the games without exceeding the 23 date limitation. What to do....

First, do not exceed the date limitation! The penalty is severe; **out of the tournament!** So, essentially, you may end up with less regular season games than you would have liked. Relief is in sight, hopefully. In June of each year, OHSAA Assistant Commissioners propose changes to the sport regulations to the Board of Directors for sports each administrates. I will be proposing the elimination of the '23 date limitation' in the regulations and propose simply permitting 27 games...regardless of how many dates you play them on. This would effectively give schools more control over their scheduling, and eliminate the situation described above. I have spoken with the OHSBCA (baseball coaches' association" and they support this recommendation. Stay tuned....

Off-Season Regulation Committee

Mentioned recently, I chair a committee that has been reviewing the off-season regulations and at the direction of the Commissioner, will soon be making a recommendation to the Board of Directors geared toward providing opportunities for SCHOOL coaches to provide individual instruction outside the season of play. Current regulations permit 10 days of instruction during the summer, whether they be used in TEAM play or INDIVIDUAL instruction. A recommendation will be coming forth in May or early June.

Rating & Voting for Officials

Don't forget to RATE your officials! This is a requirement of all schools and with recent fine notices (\$250.00/sport) recently being sent out for winter sports, it highlights the importance of this. It is important for assignment of umpires to all levels of tournament games, therefore the stiff penalty enforced for NOT doing it. This is challenging in baseball since so many games are suspended or rescheduled due to weather. Making it even more difficult is that many schools utilize assignors for umpires that may not put the names of the umpires into the myOHSAA system that must be utilized for this rating system. Check with your Athletic Director now just to make certain.

Legal Baseballs

I have heard a few concerns regarding baseballs in the past week and their inability to hold up. I have asked all AD's across the state to answer a few survey questions regarding the baseballs. With nearly 400 respondents in 1 day, 24% have indicated defective baseballs. IF this occurs, please consult your supplier for replacement. Rawlings has always stood by their product. Also, relative to 'legal baseballs', I am often asked whether the Rawlings R-100 is the only baseball that can be used for games. The answer is "No", the R-100 is the official TOURNAMENT game ball. Any ball that has the "NFHS Authenticating Mark" on it can be used for high school play.

Scrimmages and Scrimmages vs Games

Though unlikely this season, remember, if you have scrimmages remaining from the 4 permitted, you may use them any time during the baseball season, including during tournament. **But**, a word of caution....a 'scrimmage must be a scrimmage for BOTH teams'. In other words, it cannot be a scrimmage for one team and a regular season game for another.

Don't Over Schedule!

Though many do not realize it, over scheduling is not permitted by regulation. The practice of over scheduling with the anticipation that you may get rained out enough that you will have enough games to fulfill a 27 game schedule anyhow is a practice that is not permitted. Please keep in mind that the penalty for exceeding the contest limitations (27 on 23) whether it be the number of games or the number of dates is **forfeiture and removal from the tournament**. Check now before it is too late!

Player Contest Limitations

PLAYERS cannot participate in more than 27 contests. Should a player have exceeded that, he is participating at that point as an ineligible player. And, use of an ineligible player results in forfeiture.



"Play of the Day"

This year, I am including a page of "plays of the day" as compiled by Kyle McNeely, the OHSAA's "Director of Development for Umpires". The former chair of the NFHS Baseball Rules Committee, is responsible for overseeing the pre-season and continuing education for baseball umpires across the state. One aspect of this continuing education is providing "Plays of the Day" to associations across the state. This week's are on page 2.





Plays of the Day – from DOD Kyle McNeely



A complete compilation of ALL “Plays of the Day” can be found by going to:
<http://www.ohsaa.org/sports/bb/boys/2012/TWIB2012POD.pdf>

The following is a listing of the most recent “Plays of the Day” and the subsequent correct rulings that would be made as a result. Most are taken from actual cases that have occurred around the nation. Kyle McNeely is the OHSAA’s Director of Development for baseball umpires and is responsible for the education of umpires as well as recruiting new umpires. Kyle is the former chair of the NFHS Baseball Rules Committee.

Number One:

In this scenario, the defense had no idea that the batter-runner had missed first on his home run trot; at least until the first base coach let it be known.

The Play: The batter hits a home run into the stands. He is between second and third when his first base coach finally is able to get his attention to tell him he missed first base. The batter stops, dutifully re-touches second base, retreats and touches first base and completes his home run trot. The defense now wants to appeal the baserunning error, but the offensive coach states there is no appeal, as he successfully retouched first base.

The Ruling: One of the greatest challenges for the umpire is to not laugh when making his explanation. Yes, the player did return and touch first base; but he is still at risk for an appeal by the defense. An appeal they now know they should make. When the ball left the field as a home run, it became a dead ball. Part of the baserunning rules states that when the ball is dead, a runner who is on or beyond a succeeding base cannot return to the missed base. So, even though he tried to undo the baserunning mistake, the rules do not allow it. The defense appealed and the runner was out and no home run.

Number Two:

This scenario in the rules can get anyone reaching for the Advil. Picture two coaches debating a possible batting-out-of order, both using their scorebook as evidence. Today’s play occurred just a few days ago and lived up to the reputation.

The Play: The batters in the fourth, fifth, and sixth positions are due up in the home half of the seventh inning. The batter in the sixth position leads off and singles. The batter in the number five position sacrifices him to second base. The batter in the number four position comes to the plate and takes one pitch for a strike when the defense decides something isn’t right. As the coach approached the plate, the plate umpire looked to his partner who was now intently studied the mowing patterns in the outfield. The defensive coach was arguing for two outs, the number six batter who was on second base and the number four batter was now at bat. The offensive coach wanted to invoke the “concede rule.” He would concede the mistake and just start the half-inning over. Unfortunately for him, he could not convince anyone that there was a “concede rule.”

The Ruling: A few aspects of the rule become important as the plate umpire was finally able to sort through the animated discourse going on around him. First, once a pitch or a play has occurred, the batter who batted out of turn has his at-bat made legal. The next proper batter is then the one who follows him in the line-up. The plate umpire was finally able to get a lull in the conversation to let the coaches know how this situation was to be handled. The number six batter’s at-bat became legal when the number five batter took his first pitch. It was the five batter who was next batting out-of-order. But then his at-bat became legal when the number four batter took the first pitch to him for a strike. So, the five batter’s action is now good and the next batter who should be up to bat is the number six batter, but oops, he is standing on second base. “Awww,” thought the defensive coach, “he is now out, right?” The offensive coach said, “no, I get to put in a runner for him at second and he comes back and bats again.” The plate umpire’s eyes began to cross once more.

The plate umpire was right, the number six batter is actually the proper batter now, the one who should be batting. But since he is standing on second base, he stays there, and we go to the number seven batter who takes his place in the batter’s box with a 0-1 count. Go light on the Advil.

Number Three:

The Play: This play created quite a stir when it happened. The defensive coach demanded an out. His first argument was that the batter-runner was “hit” by a fair batted ball, and then his argument became that the batter-runner interfered with the pitcher fielding the ball. The head coach of the team on offense wasn’t sure what to argue, he was just hanging around the discussion to disagree if it looked like his player was going to be on the short end of the ruling. It is moments like these that as umpires, we never forget, or can forget. The plate umpire was trying to think through the shouting, while the base umpire had urgent business to attend at second base. But meanwhile, a decision needed to be made, and a bench vote wasn’t going to work. The play that caused the migraine was this: The batter bunted the ball back toward the pitching mound, a little harder than he really wanted. The pitcher, attempting to field the bunt, deflected it with his glove into the base line where it was unintentionally kicked by the batter into the dugout. The batter went and stood on first, and the fireworks began.

The Ruling: Several rules come into play. One, we cannot have a runner hit by a batted ball since it was first touched by the pitcher. Only if the runner intentionally allowed himself or moved in such a manner to be hit would we have an issue. So, the first argument by the defensive coach is negated. And there is no interference by the batter-runner, again unless he intentionally kicked the ball, as the pitcher already had his first attempt to field the bunt. So, the second argument is not going to work for the defensive coach as well. And now, the day is going to become a little tougher for him. What we in essence now have, is a ground rule double. A batted ball that has gone into a dead ball area, provides a two base award. One coach never wants to see the plate umpire again. The other coach now wants him for every game. Go figure.