

THIS WEEK IN BASEBALL - 2014



The Ohio High School Athletic Association

Issue #1 – Pre-Season

Snowstorms on Monday, 60 degrees on Saturday. Ohio. But, it's finally here and we're off to another baseball season. There are many things that come up in the early-going of the season and I hope I can touch on a few of them here. I intend again to post these approximately every 7-10 days throughout the season with the hope they provide some reminders and rule clarifications. Wishing all of you the best of luck throughout the 2014 season.

Jerry Snodgrass
Assistant Commissioner

So, What's Changed for 2014?

Actually, several things both from the playing rules side as well as the administrative side. The NFHS rule changes were detailed in the required Rules Interpretation meetings conducted online. Relative to the Administrative rules, probably the most significant change for 2014 will now permit more players in uniform for tournament play (22) but limiting the number permitted in the dugout overall. Previously, 18 had been permitted in uniform but there was no limit to how many were in the dugout. This was done for 2 basic reasons:

-to simply permit more players the opportunity to be part of the 'tournament team'. Some teams also dress more right-hand pitchers for certain opponents and lefties for others (don't we all wish we had that luxury?). None the less, there are now 22 players permitted in uniform. This will be covered in detail at your seed meetings this spring.
- to eliminate putting an unlimited number in uniform and covering it up with a jacket and indicating they were 'out of uniform'. Nearly every sport has a defined limit and now baseball does as well. We're all supportive of giving kids the 'tournament experience' but ANY organized tournament has some limitation. None of us particularly liked the idea of just covering up a JV players' uniform with a windshirt and saying he was 'out of uniform' just so he could be in the dugout. This is a fair compromise AND it was proposed and supported by the Coaches Association.

Individual Instruction Regulation Follow-Up

Another major change saw the implementation of the Individual Instruction Regulation – General Sports Regulation 8.6. This was detailed carefully in the Rules Interp. Meetings while each head coach was emailed a correspondence in early September. This regulation will be evaluated extensively at the end of the school year. It will be evaluated both on how well it was utilized as well as the number of infractions. Remember, this regulation like all others affects ALL coaches and head coaches are responsible for communicating all of them to their assistant coaches.

Coaches' Guides Online

This year, in an attempt to eliminate printing costs and save on mailing, the "Coaches Guide" (Pre-Season Manual) is posted online and was not mailed. You can download that to your computer at:
<http://www.ohsaa.org/sports/bb/boys/bbmanual.pdf>

Join The OHSBCA – YOUR Association

Though membership is handled through the OHSBCA, my relationship with the 'Baseball Coaches' Association' remains one of the best I have with any sport. I share the interest in bettering the sport while also maintaining a sense of 'order' in high school sports. Elimination of the 'pitcher/catcher' start date separation, the implementation of the out-of-season instruction regulation as well as the increase in tournament rosters are all a result of a cohesive relationship between the OHSAA and the OHSBCA. With that, I encourage you to join the OHSBCA if you have not done so already. You can join via their webpage at: http://associationdatabase.com/aws/OHSBCA/pt/sp/home_page
Before things get crazy at the start of the season, I hope you'll take a few minutes and join.

Coaches in Uniform

This has come up more in recent years but all coaches, paid or volunteer must be in the school's uniform during games. This includes a hat, jersey and pants. A trend appeared last year that coaches were starting to come to games in everything but uniform. Simply respect the game and be in uniform.

Catchers' Mask/Helmet

This comes up frequently this time of year – "can a catcher wear a separate mask and helmet combination?". The answer to this is "no" – facemasks and helmets must be tested as one piece together to receive the NOCSAE approval. Separate masks and helmets are not tested as 'one piece' and therefore do not have the NOCSAE approval and therefore are not legal per NFHS Rules.

Arm Bands/Play Cards

These are being used more and more often in the field. They are permitted but MUST be worn on the wrist or forearm as designed – NOT on the BELT or WAIST. This has come up recently between coaches and umpires – but they are NOT permitted on the belt.

Scrimmages

Teams are permitted to play 4 scrimmages and I am believing many teams did not get their scrimmages in. It may be hard to think you could ever use them all looking outside but you may use them any time during the baseball season, including during tournament – if you do not use them all in pre-season. **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.

The "Little Things"

These are small 'odds and ends' that are often taken for granted. But, if you have young/new JV or Freshmen coaches, maybe they should not be taken for granted. Share them, tack them to your bulletin board. At some point, they may be called into question and it might be good to refer to them.

Batting Helmets & Tape: With a pre-game equipment check no longer required, umpires are informed to check helmets when a player uses tape to cover the ear-hole. Why? Too often it (tape) is used to cover cracks in helmets. Players that come to the plate with an illegal batting helmet is permitted to secure a new helmet with no penalty to himself or the coach.

Ski Caps as Headware: Seriously? The NFHS playing rules do not permit the use of "non-traditional" equipment. Ski caps are NON-traditional and are not permitted.

Minimum Temperatures?: I wish I had a dollar for the number of times I have been asked if the OHSAA mandates a minimum temperature for games. Though some leagues have been successful in instituting one, there is no OHSAA regulation on this. When you stop and think, you can imagine how difficult it would be to enforce and the 'gamesmanship' that would occur with this; especially if a team were down a pitcher.

Jewelry

Jewelry is NOT permitted. Professional baseball can wear about anything but jewelry is not permitted. The various necklaces that have energy enhancing powers are not permitted.

Sunglasses

I know the sun has not been out enough to be too concerned but it does come up every year. There are no regulations concerning sunglasses. They can be worn on the bill of the cap and pitchers are permitted to wear them. Keep in mind that an umpire can ALWAYS rule something as being 'distracting to a batter' but generally should only occur if/when a pitcher would be wearing reflective (silver coated) sunglasses.

Legal Baseballs

Each year I hear a few concerns regarding '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.

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.