

My apologies to everyone for the 'late' start on putting out this year's "TWIB". Our winter tournaments just concluded (though it was summer-like weather) and it is time to move right into baseball season. This may be one of the more unusual starts to the season with a combination of factors; the elimination of the 'pitcher/catcher' designated date and the lack of 'winter' this year. I hope to put a "TWIB" up approx. every 10 days to keep coaches up to date on current issues.

Jerry Snodgrass, Ass't. Commissioner

Bat Issues...Are you Kidding?

No...unfortunately I am not. If you are a coach reading this, you will have been notified via an email that went to all Head Coaches of the second 'decertification' of a previously approved bat. No one was caught off-guard more than me when this occurred. As the administrator of a sport, I had to walk through the past 2 years of 'bat issues', 'approved lists', 'non-approved lists', etc. looking forward to this year when everything was simplified. I guess it can never be simple. "Decertification" was never in the vocabulary leading up to the Rule Changes that transitioned to the current BBCOR standard. None the less...there are now TWO bats that have been "Decertified".

The following TWO (2) bats are now considered NON-COMPLIANT and are:

- The Marucci Cat 5 – 33 inch
- The Reebok Vector TLS – 33 inch

Any use of a non-compliant bat falls under Rules 4-1-3b and 7-4-1a of the 2012 Baseball Rules Book.

No explanation was given for what led to this 'decertification' but I look forward to hearing WHAT it was.

The million dollar question; are there more coming?

I hope not....but I am hearing there will be.

Early Season Reminders

During the pre-season, everything from team pictures to 'who provides the post-game meal' dominate coaches' minds. Even those who have coached for many years often find a few items they may have forgotten to cover, especially with freshmen or Junior Varsity teams. Here are a few items you might take a rain day and focus on as part of a team meeting or with your coaching staff:

Jewelry & "Phiten" Necklaces:

The so-called energy-enhancing bracelets and necklaces are NOT legal in high school baseball. A commonly advertised item is marketed as a "Phiten" necklace/bracelet and often worn by professional athletes. It is not legal. Other items such as the "Livestrong" bracelet, WWJD bracelets, etc. are also NOT legal. You see these in the Pro's and many believe they are legal in High School...they are not.

Non-Interscholastic Baseball (Travel, Club)

Participation in non-interscholastic baseball programs during the season of play are strictly prohibited. This includes try-outs, practices, or contests. Take a few minutes and remind your players, especially those in the younger grades...**stay away** from them until the season is complete. Bottom line; we want our players with school coaches during the season of play.

Private Instruction from Pitching/Hitting Coaches

Private instruction IS permitted during the season as long as you the coach permit it. Be careful....a growing number of 'travel/summer coaches have worked this regulation to their benefit and 'disguise' club/travel practices with permissible individual workouts. In most cases, if it walks like a duck...it is a duck.

Coach Certification

All coaches in Ohio, whether paid **or** volunteer are required to possess a "Pupil Activity Validation" certificate through the Ohio Department of Education. Remember, submission of names and permit numbers is required on the Tournament Entry Form this year. Don't let this get to that point.

Playing in JV/Varsity Games on Same Day

Per rule change this year, there are no penalties for adding a player's name to a lineup card after the game starts. This opens the door for a JV player to leave a JV contest, 'come over' to the Varsity contest and participate in that game. Though this IS permissible, the very first item listed in the baseball sports' regulation (1.1) prohibits any team or individual from playing in more than two games per day. This would then prohibit a player from leaving a JV contest, playing in the Varsity contest (or freshmen contest) and then returning BACK to the JV contest. Keep in mind that playing in 2 games in a day count toward that player's 27 total permitted on the season. There is no 'inning requirement' that must be met during the year.

Play of the Day



A few years ago, the OHSAA employed "Directors of Development" for each of the recognized sports. Kyle McNeely serves as the OHSAA's "DOD" for baseball. These "DOD's" are given the responsibility of serving as the chief Rule Interpreter for all NFHS Playing Rules while also providing continuing education for umpires across the state. Though much of this continuing ed. is provided through local association meetings, Kyle also provides periodic bulletins while also providing a "Play of the Day" and subsequent ruling that is electronically communicated with each District Umpire's secretary for distribution. YOU can read these 'Plays of the Day' on page two of This Week in Baseball.





Plays of the Day – from DOD Kyle McNeely



The following is a compilation of "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:

While this play is not that complex, it did manage to trip up some umpires in a game a few weeks ago.

The Play: With runners on first and second base, the batter hits a solid line drive in the gap in right center field. The runner at first was off with the pitch, and both are going to attempt to score on the play.

The runner from second trips over a loose shoelace as he nears third base and goes down in a tumble. The runner from first base, not far behind, slows down and stops behind the runner who is struggling to get back up on his feet. He helps his team mate up and they both proceed on to score. The throw comes in from the outfield, and the defensive coach begins arguing for outs. He believes that a double play should now be called, the runner from second who scored, he says, should be out as he was assisted by this following team mate, and the runner from first should also be out for his part in the "interference."

The Ruling: No outs will be declared. Both runs will count. The following runner has the ability to help his team mate up, provided he does not "pass" him while assisting him

Number Two:

The Play: With runners on first and third, the batter hits a clean double.

The runner from third easily scores and the runner from first is waved home. In his haste to score, however he clearly does not touch third base. The head coach, in the third base coaching box, sees the miss and 1) yells at him to stop and go back; or 2) grabs him by his arm to stop him and then tells him to go back. As the plate umpire, do you have a call to make? Or is it just baseball?

The Ruling, in 1) it's nothing. That is what a coach is there to do.

There are no issues. But in 2) we have interference on the coach for physically assisting the runner. This interference is one of the few interference occasions where the ball is delayed dead; not immediately dead. At the end of playing action, the runner who was assisted by the coach is called out, and other runners return to the base occupied at the time of the interference. This type of coach's interference can occur even when the ball is dead. The rule states that a coach may not physically assist a runner during playing action. This can occur when a batter hits a home run and as he advance to home, he misses third base and the coach reaches out and stops him. The player would be called out for the interference even though the ball is dead.

But please don't get this mixed up with a coach patting a player on the back or rear in congratulations. That is **not** assisting a runner.

Number Three:

This play happened a few weeks ago in a high school game played in the south. The plate umpire knew what he had to do, yet dreaded the repercussions that he knew were to come.

The Play: With the home team ahead in the top of the sixth, 1-0, the visiting team has not been having a fun day. It has been one of those games where it seems every bounce, every close play, every call has gone against them. The visiting team's head coach, knowing it is not a conspiracy, is still frustrated. Finally, with two outs, they have runners on second and third. With a count of 1-2, the batter swings and misses at a ball in the dirt and no one knows where the ball went. Both his runners score and the batter gets to first base. They finally catch a break; or do they?

One other "minor" factor here. As the plate umpire reached into his ball bag to hand another ball to the catcher, he realizes the baseballs he had there has grown. There are now three, instead of the two that were there at the beginning of that play. The pitched ball in the dirt; that was swung at and missed by the batter, went into the ball bag. The day is about to get a lot worse for the visiting team.

The Ruling: Once the pitch became "lodged" in the plate umpire's ball bag, it was immediately dead. The result of a pitch becoming dead is that all runners on base are awarded one base from where they were at the time of the pitch. Under normal circumstances, with first base unoccupied, the batter is entitled to go to first on a dropped third strike or a third strike not caught on the fly. But with the ball being dead, he cannot attempt to advance, and with that being the third strike, he is out. So, had there been one out (or no outs) at the beginning of this play, the visiting team would have only tied up the game, not gone ahead; the runner from third would have been awarded home and the runner from second awarded third. But with two outs, and the batter now out on strikes for the third out, no runs can score. The visiting coach thought he had gone ahead, and would have grudgingly settled for a tied game. But now he must get the news that the half inning is over and he is still behind. I understand the conversation did not go well.