

To: All Head Softball Coaches
From: Jerry Snodgrass, Assistant Commissioner/Softball Administrator
Lauren Prochaska, Team Sports Program Coordinator
Re: Coaches Memo 2 – April 4, 2016

Welcome back to Ohio for many of you (and the 'great' weather). Week 1 under our belts and I hope you'll find some of the items below useful. As mentioned before, if there are issues you think need addressed on a state-wide basis, please do not hesitate to let us know. I would love to tell you we made it through with zero ejections, however....not the case. A better week ahead.

Common Softball Q and A's

Keeping with the consistency in the other sports we administrate, there now is a document posted on the Softball page (Inside OHSAA Softball) that provides answers to the most common questions we receive throughout the season. I think you will find these very useful. You may also get to that document directly at: <http://www.ohsaa.org/sports/sb/girls/2016/QandA.pdf>

"Outside Instruction" DURING The Season

Before I get into the nuts and bolts of this, there is one fact that we should all know: *For many years, COACHES and SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS want players on teams to be focused on the task at hand – school baseball, AND with the coaching and direction of SCHOOL coaches.* This is not meant to be derogatory toward travel/non-school coaches, it is just what we have always believed in. Now...the nuts and bolts of this regulation.... The OHSAA's Non-Interscholastic Regulation DOES permit individuals on your team to receive INDIVIDUAL SKILL INSTRUCTION by non-school coaches during the season ***unless YOU or your school has a policy against it.*** But....there is more to the story:

First, the OHSAA's Non-Interscholastic Rule prohibits players in a sport from participating in any workout, practice, tryout or competition with a non-school team or program during the same sport season. A baseball player cannot participate in any of the above with a non-school team or program while a member of the school baseball team. And, as mentioned, this was all done years ago at the request of schools AND coaches to keep players' focus on the school team.

So....receiving INDIVIDUAL INSTRUCTION (as an individual OR a group) can occur provided the coach or school does not have a policy against it. But, assuming they do not, many non-school programs have taken this permission and run with it. So the "club/travel" coach decides that he/she is going to give "individual instruction" to a group of players that *just happen to be on his or her spring/summer team.* Permissible? Maybe....but it no doubt is skirting the rule.

So, my method of dealing with it is this way:

1. Generally, I figure if there is some payment for a lesson/instruction....then there is probably little chance they are violating the intended non-interscholastic rule and it truly IS an instructional lesson.
2. If there is no payment – then I generally view it as a rogue summer/travel coach trying to get his team together and simply CALLING it individual instruction (since we would not see what he/she is doing).

One may not agree but my stance on this has been to uphold the integrity of why this rule was created and the best safeguard for baseball coaches to caution their players. Since the penalty for violating it is immediate 'ineligibility' – and resulting forfeitures if that ineligible player would get in a contest.....I figure my stronger stance on it is more protective of the school. AND...I

So...I hope that isn't too confusing. Just the stance I have taken on it to protect teams and coaches and attempt to stay within the framework of the intentions of that General Sports Regulation.

The OHSAA's Non-Interscholastic Rule – Reminder #2

Count on this being an 'almost' weekly reminder – PLEASE remind your players not to have any involvement (practicing, tryout, or competition) with any non-school (travel, club, etc.) team while they are members of your school team. Simply put – it makes them ineligible from that point forward.

Count Your Games!

Unfortunately, each and every year and more and more in each sport season, a team is found to have exceeded the number of contests permitted (27). The resulting penalty is removal/non-participation in the OHSAA Post-season tournament. NO one wants that. So, check your schedule carefully. Cancelling and rescheduling often adds confusion. Prevent it by keeping track.

Competitive "Balance"

Many have asked. The "Competitive Balance" referendum was passed by member schools 2 years ago. Recently, the OHSAA's elected Board of Directors voted to delay the implementation of this referendum until the fall of 2017. Basically, the plan (which many have forgotten) adjusts a TEAM's enrollment based upon 'where a player lives'. Obviously from that you can tell that it is 'sport specific' and is all based upon the premise of a team's roster and the school district OR attendance zone in which they reside. A player that plays on any 9-12 baseball team that lives outside the school district counts more than a player that lives IN the school district. These adjustments affect the final enrollment count of a team (a baseball team could be different than a softball team for example) and ultimately could affect the division a school is placed in for that sport. You can also see that it would be very likely for some schools to have teams in different divisions. There are much more specific details but that is the idea of this. So, for those asking, the plan has been delayed a year primarily to perfect a system to collect and figure these different factors that make up the team's 'final enrollment count'.

Ejection Rule Change

Effective this year, ejections from any pre-season scrimmage result in suspension from the first regular season contest. Previously, any ejection from a scrimmage went unreported with no consequences, however, there was concern across the state with various issues happening in pre-

season scrimmages that 'something' needed to be done to curtail several issues. Another change in the Ejection rule now permits a player that was ejected to be in the dugout/locker room for other sports during his period of suspension and he may ride with the team. BUT....he is NOT permitted to be in uniform and is not permitted to participate in ANY part of the warm-up during pre-game or during the game. We previously mentioned that documents such as one detailing regulations such as this can be found on the "Inside OHSAA Softball" page on the OHSAA's softball web page at: <http://www.ohsaa.org/sports/sb/girls/default.asp>

Suspended Games – Resumption of Play

This is interesting and also often misunderstood. I will work 'backward' on this explanation. First...in any sport, whenever a suspended game is picked up and completed, every situation that was in place at the time of interruption is to be in place for the resumed portion of the game. The runners on base, the count on the batter, etc. Few may realize the other implications of this. Most notably, they are:

- **Player/Coach Ejections:** This is interesting as well. If a player was ejected in the initial game that was suspended, he remains suspended for the resumption of the game. Here is another aspect of this – say "player A" was ejected for Malicious contact in a game. The game is suspended in the 3rd inning due to inclement weather. First, that 'game' (not a completed one) does not count in the 2 game suspension of the player. So, she still has 2 games to sit out but oddly enough, she is also ineligible for the resumption of the suspended game. Unfortunately, she potentially does have to miss more than the 2 games when that scenario occurs. The same situation plays out for a coach who is unfortunately ejected.

Softball Coaches Guide/Manual

We actually covered this previously but as teams move outside and there is less and less time to deal with the 'behind the scenes' issues, please take a moment to download the Softball Coaches Guide and pass it along to your assistant coaches. More and more issues arise with assistants and volunteers not understanding various regulations so this *should* help you considerably. You can download it at:

<http://www.ohsaa.org/sports/sb/girls/sbmanual.pdf>

Ineligible Players due to Transfer

With the transfer rule being relaxed considerably 2 years ago, there are obviously more and more transfers. Do yourself (and your team) a big favor and just double check for anyone that is on your roster now that was NOT on the roster a year ago. If they were not, check with your Athletic Director to see if that player is a transfer. IF that player is a transfer and does not meet any of the exceptions that would grant them immediate eligibility, they are ineligible for the first 13 completed contests. This brings up some interesting scenarios. IF a player is sitting out due to transfer and one of the first 13 games is suspended due to weather (for example), that game does not count as one of the 13 that he must sit out until that game is completed. Should that game be completed later in the season after the player has sat out 13, he remains ineligible for the resumed portion of the game – not because of the transfer rule but because all 'conditions' (including eligible players) must be the same in the resumed portion of the game as in the beginning/initial portion of the game. And, keep in mind that ineligible players are **not** permitted to participate in scrimmages during the time of their ineligibility.