

Softball Frequently Asked Questions

The OHSAA receives a *large* volume of calls and email at the conclusion of the season in regard to what coaches 'can and cannot do'. Though this is not inclusive, a few guidelines are listed below to assist you AND your middle school and sub-varsity coaches. Please remove, copy and share this page with others on your staff. Please go through your Athletic Administrator for questions related to the OHSAA's Bylaws and Sports' Regulations. All are contained within the OHSAA's Handbook, pictured to the right and are also available online at www.ohsaa.org.

When is Softball's "No-Contact Period"?

Answer: The "No-Contact Period" for softball ENDS with Labor Day and begins 28 days (4 weeks) prior.

Can Middle School Players practice or play with High School players?

Answer: No. OHSAA Bylaws prohibit middle school players from practicing *or* competing with High School players during the season of play in all sports.

Can Middle School Players participate in Open Gyms/Fields at the High School level?

Answer: Yes. OHSAA Bylaws and Sports Regulations do not prevent anyone from participating in Open Gyms/Fields/Facilities.

Can Middle School Players participate with High School Players during "Summer Ball" or "Fall Ball"?

Answer: Yes. Any competition that occurs outside the defined season of play is not considered OHSAA "sponsored" and therefore not under any regulations that limit 7-8 from playing with 9-12 individuals.

Can Middle School Players Be Included with High School Players during Individual Instruction permitted by Sports Regulation 8.2.1?

Answer: Yes. Since it is OUTSIDE the season, there is no restriction on age groups relative to this regulation. ANY individual receiving instruction must be counted as one of the FOUR (4) permitted in *all combined facilities where the instruction is taking place*.

What can we as coaches do during an Open Field?

Answer: Coaches may supervise the Open Field. Open Fields cannot be made mandatory. Open Fields must be 'free and unstructured play, so NO coaching may take place during an Open Gym. Open Gyms are defined in their entirety in Sports' Regulation #10 on pages 71-72. Under no circumstances may Open Fields be a disguise for an early start to practice. Language in the "Individual Instruction" regulation (General Sports Regulation 8.2.1) delineates the permissions in that regulation from those in Open Gyms.

What can coaches do during Conditioning Programs?

Answer: First, conditioning programs (defined as "Physical Fitness Programs in the OHSAA Handbook) cannot be made mandatory. Sports' Regulation #9 starting on page 70 of the OHSAA Handbook defines Physical Fitness/Conditioning Programs. Obviously, conditioning programs cannot be used as a 'disguise' for conducting out of season practices. Language in the "Individual Instruction" regulation (General Sports Regulation 8.2) delineates the permissions in that regulation from those in Open Gyms.

Who can volunteer to be a member of the coaching staff?

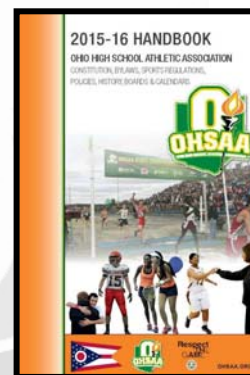
Answer: To work with student-athletes in any school program, an individual must receive his/her Pupil Activity Permit through the Ohio Department of Education and be approved by the school's Board of Education. Once achieving these requirements, a volunteer falls under all Bylaws and Sports Regulations of the OHSAA which limits them to the same out of season coaching limitations as paid staff members.

Can volunteer coach players from the school team during the June 1 – July 31 period of time?

Answer: Basically, 'yes', but when teams are playing with more than 50% of a schools' roster (4), the days of coaching/instruction must be counted in the 10 total permitted to the staff. If the non-interscholastic team is comprised of LESS than 4 players from the school, the days coaching that team in TEAM COMPETITION do not count toward the 10 days permitted to that coaching staff. Based upon the language adopted in the "Individual Skill Instruction Regulation (8.2), the example given here would NOT fit within that regulation.

What if I INSTRUCT only ONE (or up to FOUR) players in hitting instruction during the June 1 – July 31 period. Do THOSE days count?

Answer: IF there are no more than 4 individuals present in all the combined facilities where the instruction is taking place, this would be permissible under newly adopted (2013) General Sports Regulation 8.6 that permits school coaches the opportunity to provide individual skill instruction outside the season of play.



So, this 'new' regulation that is becoming known as the "4 Player Rule"what is it exactly?

Answer: This regulation was adopted to provide an affordable option to parents and student-athletes to receive individual skill instruction currently limited to non-school private instructors. The regulation states: *"Interscholastic coaches in the team sports of softball, basketball, cross country, field hockey, football, ice hockey, soccer, softball, track & field, volleyball and wrestling may provide individual instruction anytime outside the season of play outside the defined no-contact periods. Individual instruction is defined as no more than four individuals present at one time in all combined facilities where the instruction is taking place."*

There are many different questions that arise regarding this new regulation, where can I find out more?

Answer: Follow the link below for a complete explanation of this regulation. Keep in mind that ALL school individuals – paid AND volunteer – must follow this regulation. Go to: <http://ohsaa.articulate-online.com/4244037503>

Can a volunteer coach players from the school team during the "Off-season" 'travel softball' (or other non-school softball)?

Answer: No. A volunteer coach is restricted to the same out-of-season (non-interscholastic) rules that a paid coach is restricted to.

If my son or daughter plays on a Non-Interscholastic team (such as "club" or "travel") can I coach them if I am a school coach?

Answer: *Only* during the June 1 – July 31 period of time. Coaching one's own players is prohibited outside the season other than those dates and no exception is provided for families.

Can a player on my team participate in non-interscholastic team(s) at the same time as the season?

Answer: No. Sports' Regulation #4 prohibits student-athletes from participating in programs of the same sport such as "Travel, Club" and like programs during the season of play. Coaches should go to great lengths to explain this to players on their teams and remind them periodically throughout the season.

When CAN a player on my team participate in Non-Interscholastic Softball?

Answer: As soon as his season is complete. This means a Varsity player may participate as soon as his last game (including tournament) is played. Any sub-varsity player may play non-interscholastically when his season is complete *but* it must be kept in mind that he cannot return to dress/participate in any OHSAA tournament game. Many Athletic Administrations will safeguard this by allowing no level of player to participate in non-interscholastic softball until the varsity's last tournament game. Though not entirely necessary, this DOES safeguard all athletes.

How many players can play together on a Non-Interscholastic team (such as "travel" or "ACME" or "Legion ball")?

Answer: FOUR (4). OHSAA Sports Regulations limit the number of participants on any non-interscholastic roster during all months except May 27, 2016 (the Friday prior to Memorial Day) and July 31, 2016 to no more than 50% of those that make up a starting lineup of a team. In softball that "magic number" is 4.

How are players 'considered' when Middle School/Junior High players play with High School players in the off-season?

Answer: Players are considered middle school/junior high until August 1 of their 9th grade year and are considered separate as it relates to participating on non-interscholastic teams. For example; 4- 8th graders could participate on a "Club" (non-interscholastic) team along with 4- 9th graders from the same school. They are considered separate.

During the summer, how many days are we permitted to coach our players?

Answer: TEN (10) **anytime there are more than 4 individuals (players from last year's team or NOT)**. From June 1 – July 31, a coaching staff is permitted to coach a total 10 days, known as 'instructional days'. These days are designed as "Team Instructional Days" and are afforded to coaching staff's for that reason. The newly General Sports Regulation permitted INDIVIDUAL instruction was added to provide an opportunity for individual skill instruction while leaving the "Team Instruction" time intact.

Does a day of my own summer camp count toward these 10 days?

Answer: Yes, as long as there are more than 4 present *in all the combined facilities where the instruction is taking place*. Any day of individual instruction or team instruction is considered one of the 10 total permitted between June 1 and July 31 if more than 4 individuals are present in all combined facilities where the instruction is taking place.

How about if I coach a team (from June 1 – July 31) that consists of only 4 players from my school team? (less than 50% of the roster)

Answer: Currently the OHSAA does not view that as an instructional day, but one must remember it MUST be between June 1 and July 31 AND it must be in TEAM COMPETITION.

In the above, it is stated that it must be in "Team Competition". Explain that.

Answer: When a non-school 'summer' team is comprised of 4 or less players from the same school, a coach may coach that team (ONLY during June 1 – July 31) without those days counting toward the 10 'instructional days' permitted to a staff **if and only if**, the coaching is done during TEAM play. This is NOT true, and all days must count toward 1 of the 10, when instruction is provided to a school team member during June and July whether there is 1 player there or 100 players there.

Does each member of my staff receive 10 separate days?

Answer: No. Obviously, if this were to occur, a school could have upwards of 40 and 60 days of permitted instruction. The 10 days permitted are per staff.

Do Volunteers count in the 10 day total?

Answer: Yes. As mentioned earlier, all volunteers fall under the Bylaws and Sports Regulations of the OHSAA. The 10 days permitted to a staff are inclusive of paid and volunteer coaches.

Are players permitted to receive "private" instruction from individuals such as "outside/private" pitching instructors or hitting instructors DURING the season of play?

Answer: Yes....if your school athletic administration approves it. Sports' Regulation 5.3 DOES permit individuals to receive Individual Skill Instruction at ANY TIME in Individual or Group lessons.

One of my players was selected to play in a SOFTBALL or FOOTBALL All-Star game during the softball season. Is he permitted to play in that contest?

Answer: Yes. The regulations that prohibit players from playing non-interscholastic SOFTBALL during the softball season. They do not prevent a player from playing in another sport.

Given the above, does that mean a softball player is permitted to play on an AAU Basketball team during the softball season?

Answer: Yes. The player would not be violating any OHSAA Sports' Regulations.

Given the above, does this also mean that a player could be on our school's track team while also being on the school's softball team?

Answer: Yes. Any limitations on that would be imposed by individual schools.

Can players participate in "Hitting Leagues" during the off-season?

Answer: Yes, however, they are limited to the 50% limitation of 4 players from the same school on the same "hitting league" team.

Since weather issues often force games to be made up LATE in the season, how late can we actually play a game?

Answer: The last game for a game to be played is the Saturday after the state tournament (June 11 in 2016).

IF we have to make up games late in the season, can our players play for their summer teams while still completing our regular schedule?

Answer: NO. All non-interscholastic rules are in effect during the season, regardless of how late the season goes.

What is meant by the "Non-Interscholastic Date" and *when* is it?

Answer: The "Non-Interscholastic Date" for softball is **April 18, 2016**. Though softball players are not permitted to tryout, practice OR compete for any non-interscholastic team during the season of play, any player that does so ON or AFTER this date renders a player ineligible for the OHSAA tournament in addition to any other penalties.

I have a player that has been selected to participate in a "Home Run Derby" contest during the season. Is he permitted to do this?

Answer: Yes. A contest such as this is not considered as "non-interscholastic softball" and is permitted to do this. One should pay CLOSE ATTENTION to the prizes being offered and the amateur rules associated with the contest.

Can a school approved coach coach a non-school team (i.e. 'travel') during the same time he is coaching the school team?

Answer: Yes. The OHSAA has not regulation prohibiting this. However, it does not waive any of the "Recruiting Bylaw" defined in detail in Section 9 of Bylaw 4. Coaches that do this should pay special attention to this Bylaw to not attempt to circumvent the "Recruiting Bylaw".

Can I travel out of state to play a contest?

Answer: Yes, with certain restrictions. Teams may travel out of state to a bordering state (contiguous state) an unlimited number of times to play. Teams may travel to NON-bordering (contiguous states) **one time** per sport per season to compete provided there is no loss of school time.

Can I take my team out of state just to practice?

Answer: No.

Can my team practice while out of state to a permitted tournament?

Answer: Yes. OHSAA Bylaw 9 permits a team to practice out of state while part of an approved out of state competition.

Are we permitted to schedule MORE than 27 contests in the event we have rainouts?

Answer: No. Teams are NOT permitted to over schedule. Consider the consequences; 2 years ago, the weather in Ohio was GREAT. There was talk that many teams DID over schedule and were forced to 'drop' or cancel contracts. There are serious repercussions for breaking contracts, whether financial penalties exist on the contract or not. With the internet communication, games are easy to pick up if you need games.

Are schools permitted to schedule doubleheaders during the week?Answer: Yes. This became permitted 2 years ago. As with many regulations, you will not find this written – many regulations are written only to express what you can NOT do. You MAY schedule doubleheaders during the week.

Are you able to play more than 2 games in a day in Softball?

Answer: Yes, ONE TIME PER SEASON on a Saturday, softball teams may play 3 games in one day. This verified in Softball General Regulations 1.1.

Is a coach permitted to have a scrimmage during the season or during tournament time?

Answer: Yes. As long as a team has a scrimmage remaining, they may use it at any time. It IS important to note that any scrimmage with another school must be a scrimmage for THAT school also; it cannot be a 'game' for one school and a 'scrimmage' for another school.

Are teams permitted to practice with another school?

Answer: Yes, BUT, it must be counted as a scrimmage.

Are OHSAA member school teams permitted to play against a non-school team?

Answer: Yes. Ohio is one of the few states that do not regulate 'who' its teams participate against.

Is a female permitted to play on a BASEBALL team, even if the school has softball?

Answer: Yes. Regardless of whether or not a school has a softball team, a girl may play on a school's baseball team if the school has no policy against it. A girl that does so is limited to playing on the baseball team only and cannot move back and forth between baseball and softball.