

To: All OHSAA Head Softball Coaches
From: Jerry Snodgrass, Assistant Commissioner
Lauren Prochaska, Program Coordinator

With the “no-contact period” approaching, this is an end of the summer memo to all softball coaches to remind everyone of a few important regulations. We hope YOU find this helpful and are able to take time to read many of the reference documents during the off-season and the no-contact period that will ultimately help you next spring.

Need Answers to Questions?

Seldom to we say this, however, the start of fall practices – transfers, new coaches, as well as the administration of other sports, makes it very difficult to keep up with phone calls and emails for out of season coaches. Though, just like you, we do work incredible hours over the next few months, if you need questions answered, please check out the documents on “Inside OHSAA Softball” at: <http://www.ohsaa.org/sports/sb/girls/default.asp> and check with your Athletic Director first. Thanks in advance for being patient during this period of time.

Softball No-Contact Period

Just a simple reminder that the No-Contact Period for softball (and selected other sports) now runs the ‘month of August’ – from August 1 – August 31. Though it is fairly straight forward, you can read the specifics of the No-Contact Period at: <http://www.ohsaa.org/sports/sb/girls/2017/SoftballNoContactRule.pdf>

Fall Softball

AFTER the No-Contact Period, fall isn’t just for volleyball anymore...Fall baseball, fall softball and fall basketball leagues are increasing in number every year. With the increase in these, this is just a reminder that General Sports Regulation 7.3.1 still restricts the number of players that played for the same school teams the previous season to FOUR on the same NON-school team outside the season (except during June and July). So, IF your players are playing in a fall league, just insure there are not more than 4 that played for any of your school teams the previous season on the same fall team. Please do not confuse this rule with the “4 Player Individual Instruction Regulation” (see below) as they are completely separate regulations. Advice, clarifications and common Q and A’s on “Fall Ball” are posted at: <http://www.ohsaa.org/sports/sb/girls/default.asp> under the “Inside OHSAA Softball” heading.

And, I am often asked if there is a regulation that prohibits a volleyball player from playing fall softball. There is not. The ‘non-interscholastic rule’ only affects individuals from participating in the SAME non-school sport during the same season (a softball player cannot participate in ‘travel’ SOFTBALL during the softball season, etc.). It might drive a volleyball coach or a basketball coach getting ready for their winter sport crazy and your school may have a policy against it but the OHSAA does not.

NFHS Rule Changes

The NFHS recently released rule changes for the 2017 season. I would encourage EVERYONE to read the document at: <http://www.ohsaa.org/sports/sb/girls/2016/2016NFHSRulesProcessforSoftball.pdf>

It is important to understand the PROCESS how rules are created on a national level. Also mentioned in the previous memo to softball coaches sent out the end of June, we explained that the “double first base”, which IS one of the state adoptions, WILL be required in Ohio for 2017. Please make sure you speak to your athletic director about this so it is not a last minute purchase for your fields.

The NFHS Rule changes for 2017 can be read at: <http://www.ohsaa.org/news/201617NFHSSoftballRulesRelease.pdf>

Individual Instruction

We are entering the 4th year for the Individual Instruction Regulation. Knowing most softball coaches do not utilize this until January, there are still some things to take note of. Though there are some fairly strict parameters, this is a reminder that the purpose of this was to provide coaches the opportunity to provide individual SKILL instruction – NOT team workouts. There is nothing in the regulation that would permit coaches to coach fall teams – this is a misconception not permitted by the regulation. I would encourage you to read, print and disseminate the updated explanation of this regulation located at:

<http://www.ohsaa.org/sports/sb/girls/2017/IndividualInstructionRegulation.pdf>

Are YOU a Private Instructor or Own Your Own Facility?

This question comes up more and more – “if I own my own facility or I am a private instructor, am I able to instruct players from my own school’s teams during the no-contact period”? The answer to that is still ‘no’. There has been no exception granted for those

individuals who own their own facilities or are employed as private instructors. Currently, only individual sport coaches (tennis, golf, swimming, etc.) are afforded this exception.

A Clarification on Out-of-Season Instruction

Individuals that have never played for a school team are not 'governed' by any OHSAA regulations. In other words, if you have the next rising fast pitch star in your school who is a freshman and you do not have Junior High softball at your school, that rising star is not governed by any OHSAA softball regulations or general sports regulations until she participates in her first game or scrimmage for your school. So, what does this mean? It means she does not count as one of the 4 individuals (50% limitation) on a 'Fall Ball' team. She also could receive instruction from any school coach without restriction. But keep in mind, she WOULD still count as one of the 4 individuals permitted in Individual instruction if *any* of the other 3 were previous players for your school.

Open Field/Open Gym

It has been our intent to remove any and all misunderstandings and also address all scenarios permitted within various other sports regulations – most notably those addressing “Open Gyms/Fields” and “Conditioning & Weight Programs”. Basically, in an “open field”....it can be **unstructured** play. No instruction, no hitting ground balls, no rotating into the batting cages, etc. You may ask “what CAN you do”? Basically, players can choose sides and..... *play softball*.. But keep in mind, that is why the individual instruction regulation was put in place – to PERMIT you to do some coaching/instruction outside the season. “Open Fields/Gyms” and “Individual Instruction” are 2 entirely separate regulations and I strongly encourage you to understand both. Detailed off-season softball Q and A’s are addressed in a document under the “Inside OHSAA Softball” heading on at: <http://www.ohsaa.org/sports/sb/girls/default.asp>

“Showcases”

Another overnight sensation – “Showcases”. Intended to feature the ‘elite’ players, Ohio stands to have the best tournament ever based upon the number of “Showcases” that have developed. Simply keep in mind that “Showcases” are no different than any other “Travel”, Classic” or whatever other name they may go by in the off-season. There is a limit of 4 players on these teams that played for the same school teams the previous seasons if these “Showcases” involve team play. If they are hitting, throwing, etc., they are permitted to do these outside the season. Just as indicated above with “Fall Leagues” and the same General Sports Regulation (7.3.1) applies.

2017 Schedule Notes & An Important Reminder

No doubt, where spring break falls and the start of the season for games causes some difficulty for schools making out of state trips (especially south). Our Coaches’ Memo in late June reminded all coaches of an important change for 2017 that WILL permit you to scrimmage in non-bordering states. Yes...you are reading that correctly. But, a very important reminder:

1. Regular Season Games may begin on March 25, 2017, not before
2. Any scrimmage MUST be a scrimmage for both schools (not a game for one and a scrimmage for the other)
3. Any game must be a game for both schools (not a scrimmage for one and a game for the other)
4. Any travel to a non-bordering state cannot result in missing school time for travel OR competition
5. Schools are permitted to travel to non-bordering states ONE time per season provided they meet the above requirements of the bylaw.

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6. Regular Season Games may begin on March 25, 2017, not before
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