



March 12, 2019

NFHS Softball Weekly Rule Interpretations

SITUATION 1: B3 bats and hits a double bringing B4 up to the plate with no outs. In (a) the defensive coach requests that B4 be intentionally walked. In (b) the pitcher requests that B4 be intentionally walked. **RULING:** In both (a) and (b), the proper mechanic for an umpire any time a defensive coach or player wishes to intentionally walk a player is once he/she ensures all playing action is completed, signal and call time. Once the ball is dead, allow the coach or player to make the request to intentionally walk B4. **Note:** It is good practice in (b) to delay slightly when a player requests an intentional walk to ensure the defensive coach is in agreement prior to awarding the intentional walk. Once an intentional walk is awarded by the umpire it is final and cannot be reversed.

SITUATION 2: With no outs, a 1 ball 1 strike count and R1 on first base, the pitcher is called for an illegal pitch. B2 swings and misses the ball. R1 who was stealing on the pitch is thrown out at second base. The umpire rules that since R1 was stealing on the pitch she would remain out but awards the batter a ball for the illegal pitch. **RULING:** This is an incorrect ruling. Since the batter was not safe at first base and all runners did not advance at least one base on an illegal pitch, the offensive coach should receive his/her choice of the play or the penalty (6-1-1 PENALTY EXCEPTION 2). In this case the result of the play would be B2 at bat with a 1 ball 2 strike count and R1 remaining out. If the coach would like to take the penalty, a ball is awarded to B2 (2 ball 1 strike count) and R1 would be returned to first base.

SITUATION 3: With R1 on second base and no outs, F1 is called for an illegal pitch that B2 hits to the outfield. R1 scores on the play and B2 is safe on second base but misses first base on her way to second base. After the play is over the defensive coach appeals that B2 missed first base and the base umpire rules B2 out for missing first base. The offensive coach argues that they should be allowed to take the penalty for the illegal pitch since B2 was not safe at first base. **RULING:** NFHS rules state that once a runner has passed a base she is considered to have touched that base until properly appealed. Once B2 passed first base and R1 had advanced safely to third base the illegal pitch was cancelled (6-1-1 EXCEPTION 1). The intent of the illegal pitch penalty is to adequately offset the possible disadvantage she encountered due to the illegal pitch. It is not intended to allow the offense to subsequently break other rules, such as missing a base. Just as the NFHS obstruction rule is designed to protect the obstructed runner and award the bases she would have reached had there not been obstruction (remove the disadvantage of being obstructed) it too does not allow the runner to break other rules. There are exceptions listed in the obstruction rule that specifically state an obstructed runner would be called out if she missed a base or left before a fly ball was first touched (if properly appealed) and if she passed another runner, to name a few (Rule 8-4-3b PENALTY A, EXCEPTIONS).

SITUATION 4: With no outs, R1 on third base and R2 on first base, B3 is at bat with a 3 ball 1 strike count. The umpire calls an illegal pitch that B3 swings and misses. R2 was stealing second base on the

pitch and is thrown out at second base but R1 is safe stealing home. The umpire rules that since R1 advanced safely the illegal pitch is nullified, R1 scores, R2 is out at second and B3 remains at bat with a 3 ball 2 strike count. **RULING:** This is an incorrect ruling. Since the batter was not safe at first base and all runners did not advance at least one base on an illegal pitch the offensive coach should receive their choice of the play or the penalty (6-1-1 PENALTY EXCEPTION 2). In this case the result of the play would be R1 scores, R2 is out and B3 remains at bat with a 3 ball 2 strike count with 1 out. If the coach would like to take the penalty, a ball is awarded to B3 which would result in ball 4, placing B3 on first base forcing R2 to advance to second base and R1 would return to third base.