



April 22, 2026

NFHS Softball Weekly Rule Interpretations

It should be noted that due to some restructuring of the rule book performed between the 2025 and 2026 NFHS Softball Rules Book that some of the rule references have been updated. Please note the rule references provided will utilize the 2026 Rules Book.

Situation 1 It is noted that Team A has batters with a) helmets that have no face protector. In b) have no face protector that is certified by SEI to meet the NOCSAE standard, but do have a device attached to the helmet that has an area that extends from the helmet and protects the jaw of the batter on the side facing the pitcher. The umpire rules that these helmets are not legal for use in NFHS Softball and has them removed from the game and issues a team warning for utilizing illegal equipment. **RULING:** Correct ruling in both cases. All fast-pitch batting helmets must be equipped with a face protector that is certified by SEI to meet the NOCSAE standard. These face protectors are designed to provide full face protection for the batter. It must also have the phrase, "Meets NOCSAE Standard at the time of manufacture" permanently affixed to the face protector. (1-7-6, 3-5-1 Penalty)

Situation 2: In a state that requires the use of a double first base, B1 hits a ground ball to F6. They run to first base, contacting the colored portion of the base prior to F3 receiving the ball. They overrun first base and return to the colored portion of the double first base. F3 then tags the runner as they are standing only on the colored portion of first base, and the umpire rules them out stating they must return to the white portion of the base. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. The rule allows the offense and defense to touch the white or colored portion of the base:

- a. On a fair ball hit to the outfield with no play being attempted or when the runner is returning to first base.
- b. On a fly ball tag-up play.
- c. (F.P.) On an attempted pick-off play.
- d. On a base on balls.

(8-11-3)

Situation 3: In the fifth inning Team A has a substantial lead, and their coach approaches the umpire and in a) says "Blue I want to enter #11 for #1, #12 for #2 and #13 for #3". In b) says "Blue I want #11 to bat for #1 but #1 will reenter when we go on defense." In both cases the umpire states they can accept #11 for #1 but the remaining changes are projected substitutions and cannot be accepted at that time and must be made when the player is actually entering the game. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling in a) correct ruling in b). A projected substitute is an attempt to enter a substitute without first removing a player from that position in the lineup. In a) all three players can be removed from the lineup and replaced by their substitutes when the coach requests the changes. #11, #12 and #13 are replaced in the lineup by their substitutes when requested and #1, #2 and #3 are officially in the game in those positions in the lineup. It is good preventative umpiring to remind the coach that all three players are officially in the game when reported (now) so even if they do not get to bat that half inning they are now locked into that position in the lineup. However, all three changes are able to be made at the time requested and

should be accepted by the umpire. In b) #11 batting for #1 is able to be recorded on the lineup card when reported. However, the reentry of #11 cannot be recorded until after #1 has completed their at bat, this is what makes this reentry a projected substitution and prohibits the umpire from accepting it when reported. A lineup card is an active document that is intended to provide an accurate account of which players are active in the game at the current moment in time. All substitution issues are decided by the plate umpire's lineup card, so it must be accurate and current. If there was a question during the offensive half of the inning #11 has to be listed as the player that is active in that position in the lineup to settle any possible lineup issue. After the offensive half inning the coach can then report #1 reentering for #11 so that the lineup then accurately reflects the players currently active in the lineup. (2-57-4)