

Softball Rules Interpretations

By NFHS on February 09, 2021

softball

Publisher's Note: The National Federation of State High School Associations is the only source of official high school interpretations. They do not set aside nor modify any rule. They are made and published by the NFHS in response to situations presented.

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NOTE: Due to the cancellation of spring sports last year because of the Coronavirus, the 2020 NFHS Softball Rules will be used for the 2021 season. In addition to the Rules Interpretations written last year which will apply for the 2021 season, three additional Situations have been approved for the coming season. The three additional 2021 Situations, along with the six 2020 Situations approved last year, all apply to the 2020 NFHS Softball Rules and will be in effect for the 2021 season.

RULES BOOK CORRECTIONS: (Underlining shows additions; ~~strikethrough~~ shows deletions.)

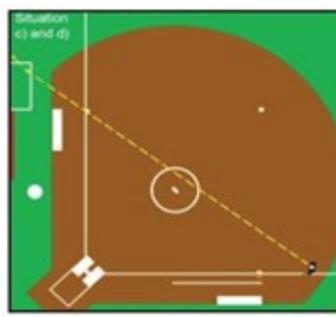
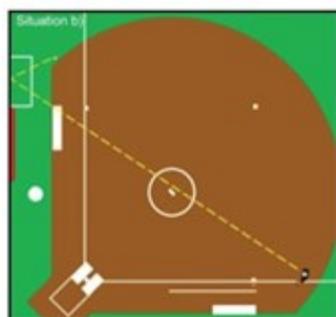
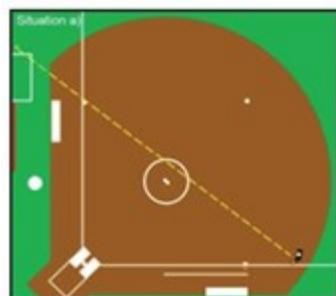
2-4-3: Damaged Bat – A bat that was once legal but is broken, cracked, dented, rattles or has sharp edges that might deface the ~~bat~~ ball. Damaged bats shall be removed from the game without penalty as in Rule 7-4-2 PENALTY NOTE; 6-1-1 (Playpic 6): The caption for figure 6 is incorrect in the rules book. It is legal for a pitcher to have just the toe of the pivot foot touching the pitcher's plate and non-pivot foot behind the pitcher's plate.

UMPIRES MANUAL CORRECTIONS: (Underlining shows additions; ~~strikethrough~~ shows deletions.) Plate Mechanics (Page 23): If the ball is near the foul line and lands in ~~fair~~ foul territory untouched, give a deadball signal and verbal call of "foul" or "foul ball;" Plate Mechanics (Page 25): ...If not, the head coach of the offended team is given the option of taking the result of the play, or having a ball awarded to the batter ~~and all runners advanced one base~~. If an illegal pitch hits a batter, the batter is awarded first base and all runners are advanced one base only if forced ~~as a result of the illegal pitch~~.

2021 SITUATIONS

SITUATION 1: Home management has marked a dead-ball area designated for the media inside the confines of the field just past the third-base dugout. A thrown ball (a) passes through this area in flight not touching anything on its way through; (b) contacts the fence that this area is attached to and bounces back toward the field never touching the ground inside the dead-ball area; (c) bounces, touching the ground inside the dead-ball area; (d) bounces, touching the ground inside the unoccupied dead-ball area. RULING: Any area inside the confines of the field designated for the media becomes a

dead-ball area for the entire game, regardless of whether it is occupied or unoccupied. In (a), the ball remains live. If the thrown ball does not touch anything in the dead-ball area it remains live. In (b), the ball is dead once it touches the fence within the dead-ball area, all runners and the batter-runner are awarded two bases from the time of the throw. In (c) and (d), the ball is dead once it touches the ground inside the dead-ball area, all runners and the batter-runner are awarded two bases from the time of the throw. There is no difference in the ruling if the area is occupied or unoccupied. (8-4-3e)



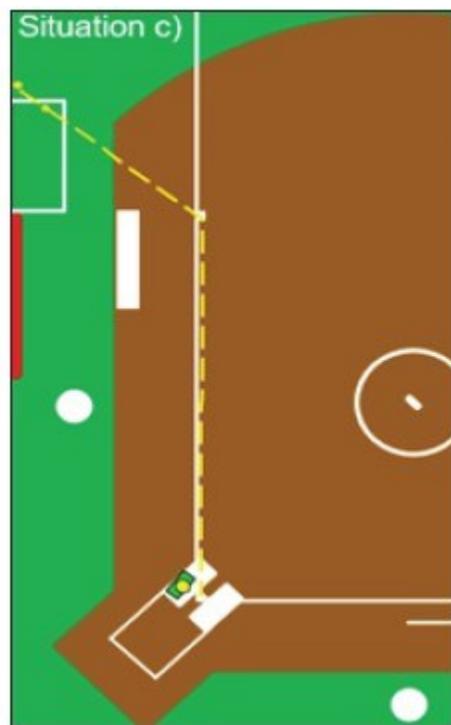
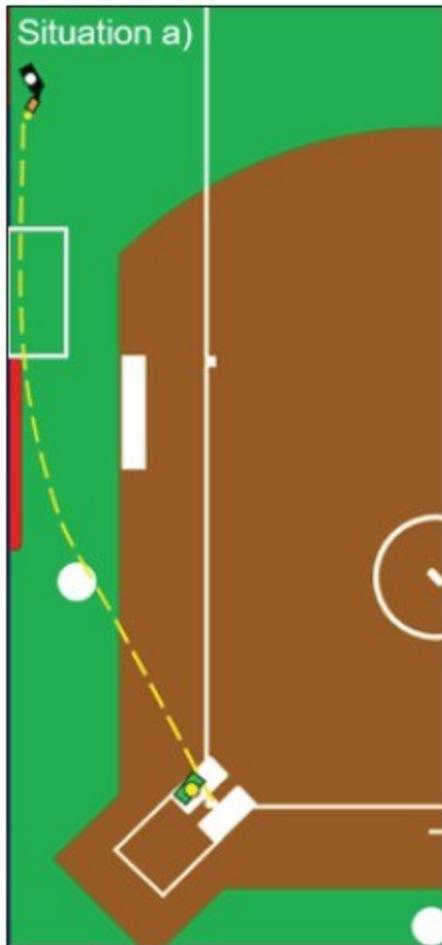
SITUATION 2: Home management has marked a dead-ball area designated for the media inside the confines of the field just past the third-base dugout. A batted ball (a) passes through the media area in flight not touching anything on its way through and is caught in the air by F7 in foul territory past the media area; (b) contacts third base and ricochets into foul territory passing through the media area in the air not touching anything inside the dead-ball area; (c) contacts third base and ricochets into foul territory, touching the ground inside the designated media area. RULING: In (a), the ball remains live, and the batter is ruled out on the catch by F7. If the batted ball does not touch anything in the dead-ball area it remains live. In (b), the ball remains live since it did not touch anything within the dead-ball area. In (c), the ball is dead once it touches the ground inside the dead-ball area, all runners and the batter-runner are awarded two bases from the time of the pitch. (8-4-3g)

SITUATION 3: (a) F1 has a powered rosin bag which she squeezes in her hand then places back on the ground prior to stepping on the pitcher's plate. Once on the pitcher's plate she goes directly to the ball without wiping the drying agent from her hand. (b) F1 takes a comparable drying agent (Gorilla Gold) from her pocket and wipes her hand on it several times, then places the towel back into her pocket. Once on the pitcher's plate she goes directly to the ball without wiping her hand. (c) F1 touches the dirt infield with her hand then steps onto the pitcher's plate and goes directly to the ball without wiping off her hand. (d) F1 picks up a hand full of dirt and rolls it around in her hand then drops the dirt and steps onto the pitcher's plate and goes directly to the ball without wiping off her hand. (e) F1 picks up a handful of dirt and places it onto the ball rubbing the dirt into the ball. RULING: Legal in (a) and (b). The powered rosin and the comparable drying agent are permitted based on their ability to not transfer to the ball. Wiping these substances off the hand prior to touching the ball is not necessary. Legal in (c) and (d). Dirt is not considered a foreign substance. Therefore, it is not necessary to wipe off the hand before going to the ball. Illegal in (e). Rubbing dirt onto the ball is considered defacing the ball and is not permitted. (1-3-6, 6-2-2)

2020 SITUATIONS

SITUATION 1: A bat that has an audible rattle is brought to the umpire's attention. The umpire rules the bat illegal and calls the batter out. RULING: This is an incorrect ruling. Bats that are damaged are removed from the game without penalty. (1-5-1c, 7-4-2 NOTE)

SITUATION 2: During the first inning, the umpire notices B3's bat has a crack and it is removed from the game without penalty. Later in the sixth inning, the umpire notices that B3 is coming to bat with the same cracked bat that was removed from the game in the first inning. The umpire believes since the infraction was caught before the batter entered the batter's box that this is a minor infraction and warns the batter, informing her she will be ejected if the bat is attempted to be used again. RULING: This is the correct ruling. Attempting to utilize a piece of equipment that has previously been removed from the game is behavior not in accordance with the spirit of fair play. Whether the offender is ejected or warned in this case is umpire judgment. This offense could be ruled more than minor and an ejection for the first offense would be supported by the rules. (1-5-1c, 3-6-13c, 7-4-2 NOTE)



SITUATION 3: The pitcher from Team A steps onto the pitcher's plate with the heel of her pitching foot against the front edge of the pitcher's plate. The umpire rules this illegal stating that part of the pivot foot must be on top of the pitcher's plate. RULING: This is an incorrect ruling. The pivot foot is only

required to be in contact with the pitcher's plate. It is legal if the pitcher wishes to "heel up to" the pitcher's plate by having just the heel of her pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate. (6-1-1)

SITUATION 4: With one out, R1 on third base and R2 on second base, B5 hits a deep fly ball that is caught by F9. Prior to F9 touching the ball, R1 begins to advance toward home while R2 legally tags and is safe at home on a close play. Once the ball is dead the defense appeals that R1 left early on the caught fly ball. The umpire rules R1 is out and R1's run nullified but allows R2's run to count since she touched home plate prior to the appeal being made. RULING: This is an incorrect ruling. Since R1 was ruled out on appeal for the third out of the inning, no run can be scored on this play. (9-1-1 EXCEPTION c)

SITUATION 5: With no outs, B2 has a 1 ball-1 strike count and R1 on second base. The pitch is low and gets by F2 as R1 attempts to steal third base. F2, in a rush to retrieve the ball, throws her helmet and stops the ball. F2 then throws the ball to F5 to retire R1. The umpire rules that R1 is awarded third base and B2 is awarded first base. RULING: This is an incorrect ruling. Since the batter has not completed her turn at bat, she is not awarded any bases on this play. R1 should be awarded third base – one base from the time of the pitch since it was a pitched ball – and B2 would remain at bat with a 2 ball-1 strike count. (8-4-3d)

SITUATION 6: With no outs, B2 has a 3 ball-1 strike count and R1 on first base. The pitch is low and gets by F2 as R1 attempts to steal second base. F2, in a rush to retrieve the ball, throws her helmet and stops the ball. R1 seeing that F2 has retrieved the ball returns to first base. The umpire rules that R1 is awarded second base and B2 is awarded first base. RULING: This is a correct ruling. Since the pitch was ball four the batter has now completed her turn at bat and should be awarded first base and R1 should be awarded second base – one base from the time of the pitch since it was a pitched ball. (8-4-3d)