



2020 MHSAA Softball Items & Reminders

Andi Osters, MHSAA Assistant Director

Phone: 517-332-5046

Email: andi@mhsaa.com

1. Online rules meetings will launch on January 27 and will close on April 16. The head varsity coach MUST complete a rules meeting or the coach is prohibited from coaching at any level in the MHSAA tournament. Assistant varsity coaches and subvarsity coaches must also complete the rules meeting requirement, or have their Athletic Director attest to them doing so.
2. Bats: For the 2020 softball season, National Federation playing rules again require that all non-wood bats must (1) display the **ASA** certification mark from 2000 or 2004 or the USA Softball All-Games Certification Mark to be a legal bat and not appear on the USA/ASA “banned bat” list and (2) must not appear on the list of the [USA Softball Non-Approved Bats with Certification Marks](#).
3. MHSAA tournament sites and groupings are posted on MHSAA.com.
4. Umpires are no longer required to inspect bats and helmets prior to the game. Head coaches shall attest at the pregame conference that all players are legally equipped.
5. Health & Safety: Information regarding concussion protocols and heat & hydration policies can be found by [Clicking Here](#).
6. Umpires are required to collect, and coaches submit a lineup card to the plate umpire at the pre-game conference. Umpires must maintain a line card throughout the game and all substitutions, including CR must be reported to the plate umpire. If a DP/FLEX is used it must be on the lineup card properly at the time of the pre-game conference when lineups become official.
7. Again in 2020, the season maximum is 38 games for a team and individual during the regular season. A school may not schedule more than 38 regular season games. MHSAA Tournament games do not count toward the 38-game maximum.
8. **2020 MHSAA Tournament Dates**
 - Districts: May 26, May 29-30.
 - Regionals: Saturday, June 6
 - Quarterfinals: Tuesday, June 9
 - Semifinals: Thursday & Friday, June 11-12 - Secchia Stadium, East Lansing
 - Finals: Saturday, June 13 - Secchia Stadium, East Lansing

2020 NFHS Softball Rules Changes

1-5-1e, 2-4, 2-4-3, 7-4-2 PENALTY NOTE: Damaged bats are defined.

Rationale: Added language to give a clear definition of a damaged bat separating it from illegal and altered bats. Damaged bats are not to be considered illegal bats, therefore they do not carry the same penalty as illegal bats. Damaged bats should be removed from the game without penalty. Language added additional certification marking (USA Softball All Games mark) to update current legal marks.

Rule 6-1-1: Prior to starting the delivery (pitch), the pitcher shall take a position with the pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate.

Rationale: Clarifies that any part of the pivot foot is in contact with the pitcher's plate is legal and no longer limits the pivot foot to contacting just the top surface of the pitcher's plate, which reflects current practice.

Rule 9-1-1 EXCEPTION c: A run is not scored if the runner advances to home plate during action in which the third out is made by the preceding runner who is declared out on an appeal play.

Rationale: Added language to make clear that if a preceding runner is called out on appeal, subsequent runner(s) that cross the plate do not count as run(s) scored.

Major Editorial Changes

1-1-7: Clarifies that game management or a state administrator may establish a dead-ball media area within the confines of the field, but that area will remain a dead-ball area throughout the game.

1-5-1d: Updates to add the new USA Softball All Games certification mark.

8-4-3d PENALTY: Clarifies that the batter-runner, not the batter is awarded bases when a fielder intentionally contacts the ball with detached equipment.

Points of Emphasis

1. Bat certification marks and USA Softball's list of Non-Approved Bats with Certification Marks
2. Damaged bat vs. illegal bat penalties
3. Contact with the pitcher's plate
4. Inspection of equipment



2020 NFHS SOFTBALL RULES INTERPRETATIONS

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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RULES BOOK CORRECTIONS:

(Underlining shows additions; ~~strike-through~~ 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; ~~strike-through~~ shows deletions.)

Plate Mechanics (Page 23): If the ball is near the foul line and lands in fair foul territory untouched, give a dead-ball 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.

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 two outs, 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 3 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)