

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE
HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

NEWS RELEASE

Baseball Rules Change Puts Moratorium on Composite Bats

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Elliot Hopkins

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (July 6, 2010) — One of six new rules changes by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Baseball Rules Committee forbids the use of composite bats until they can meet the Batted Ball Coefficient of Restitution (BBCOR) performance standard. The changes, which were subsequently approved by the NFHS Board of Directors, will take effect with the 2010-11 school year.

After thorough testing by the Baseball Research Center at the University of Massachusetts–Lowell, the NFHS Baseball Rules Committee voted to outlaw composite bats until they can produce consistent results through the life of the bat, be made tamper-evident and be labeled as a composite product.

Elliot Hopkins, NFHS liaison to the Baseball Rules Committee, visited with James Sherwood, director of the Baseball Research Center, and spent several hours witnessing composite bat testing. “Rolling the bat gives it a higher performance,” Hopkins said. “It can significantly increase the performance and that’s huge in our game.”

Rolling the bat isn’t the only problem. Rolling only speeds up the performance enhancement that would occur over time after normal use. Even composite bats that were not altered will eventually see this increase in performance, and the rules committee views that as a major concern.

Rule 1-3-2 through 5 was completely rewritten with the intention of creating a rule that

preserves the intent and spirit of the old rule, but is better suited to products resulting from new technology.

Under the new rule, bats with composite handles and tapers would still be legal. The stricter language applies primarily to the barrel of the bat.

“While the handles and taper are important components of the bat,” Hopkins said, “the area that we recognized as more susceptible to abuse is the barrel.”

Other rules changes this year aim at increasing convenience for coaches and umpires by simplifying the substitution policy and clarifying several rules.

Rule 1-1-2 now requires coaches to list all known substitutes on the lineup card before the umpire accepts it. Coaches will still be able to add a substitute without a penalty, but this should speed up substitutions and player changes during the game.

A change to Rule 2-16-2 was also made to clarify an existing rule and ease its application for coaches and players. The rule now reads: “A foul tip is a batted ball that goes directly to the catcher’s hands and is legally caught by the catcher. It is a strike and the ball is in play.”

Similarly, a “last-time-by” rule has been instituted. The new rule states that if a runner correctly touches a base that was missed the last time he was by the base, that last touch corrects any previous base-running infraction. This last-time-by practice is commonly accepted, but is now legally Rule 8-2-6l.

The last two rules changes were approved on recommendation from the NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee. First, in a change to Rule 1-5-8, all hard and unyielding items such as braces, casts, etc., must be padded with a closed-cell, slow-recovery foam padding no less than one-half-inch thick. Knee and ankle braces that are unaltered from the manufacturer’s original design/production do not require additional padding.

Second is an update to concussion language that has been added to the rules for all high school sports. The new rule, 3-1-5, puts strict constraints on players who may have suffered a concussion. The rule states that any player who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion, including but not limited to loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion of balance problems, must be removed from the contest immediately and shall not return to play before being cleared by an appropriate health-care professional.

A complete listing of all rules changes approved by the committee is available on the NFHS Web site at www.nfhs.org. Click on “Athletics & Fine Arts Activities” on the home page,

and select "Baseball."

Baseball is the fourth-most popular sport for boys at the high school level, according to the 2008-09 NFHS Athletics Participation Survey, with 473,184 participants nationwide. The sport ranks third in school sponsorship with 15,699 schools sponsoring the sport.

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This press release was written by Arika Herron, a summer intern in the NFHS Publications/Communications Department and a senior at Butler (Indiana) University.

About the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)

The NFHS, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the national leadership organization for high school sports and fine arts activities. Since 1920, the NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and fine arts activities that help students succeed in their lives. The NFHS sets direction for the future by building awareness and support, improving the participation experience, establishing consistent standards and Rules for competition, and helping those who oversee high school sports and activities. The NFHS writes playing Rules for 17 sports for boys and girls at the high school level. Through its 50 member state associations and the District of Columbia, the NFHS reaches more than 19,000 high schools and 11 million participants in high school activity programs, including more than 7.5 million in high school sports. As the recognized national authority on interscholastic activity programs, the NFHS conducts national meetings; sanctions interstate events; produces publications for high school coaches, officials and athletic directors; sponsors professional organizations for high school coaches, officials, spirit coaches, speech and debate coaches and music adjudicators; serves as the national source for interscholastic coach training; and serves as a national information resource of interscholastic athletics and activities. For more information, visit the NFHS Web site at www.nfhs.org.

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