



NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

PO Box 690, Indianapolis, IN 46206

317-972-6900, FAX 317.822.5700/www.nfhs.org

Softball Right-of-way Rules Go Into Effect in 2007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Mary Struckhoff

INDIANAPOLIS (July 5, 2006) — Effective with the 2007 high school softball season, new rules will dictate who has the right-of-way between a base runner and a fielder on a non-controlled batted ball. These rules revisions were approved by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Softball Rules Committee at its June 18-19 meeting in Indianapolis, and then were subsequently approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

“A player legally running the bases has full responsibility to avoid contact with a fielder who is attempting to make an initial play on a batted ball,” said Ralph Swearngin, executive director of the Georgia High School Association and chairperson of the NFHS Softball Rules Committee. “However, after a fielder has had an opportunity to make an initial play on a batted ball, the responsibility for contact changes. Once a fielder, excluding the pitcher, misplaya a batted ball, that fielder should not be protected and, therefore, should not be permitted to obstruct the advancement of a runner.”

A revised definition of interference states that a fielder is considered to be making an initial play on a fair batted ball when she has a reasonable chance to catch or gain control of the ball that no other fielder, except the pitcher, has touched. The fielder is still considered to be making an initial play if she fails to gain control of the batted ball, but is within a “step and reach” of the ball. This rule clarifies that the runner is charged with interference if she makes contact while the fielder is attempting to make the initial play on a fair batted ball.

In another change, Rule 3-6-17 expands the penalty when a player removes any lines of the batter’s box or on the field of play. A team warning will be issued, with the next offense resulting in a strike for the offense or a ball for the defense. The change now restricts any subsequent offender to the dugout along with the head coach.

In addition to these two rules changes, the committee approved six major editorial changes. New Rule 2-15 clearly defines the confines of the field of play as the designated dugout/bench area and any

enclosed or marked area designated as a warm-up area that is adjacent to the field and within view of the umpire(s).

“This rule identifies an area that has been left to umpire or site-by-site discretion,” said Mary Struckhoff, NFHS assistant director and liaison to the NFHS Softball Rules Committee.

Malicious contact penalties will be clarified with additions made to Rule 3-6-18, which now states that if malicious contact is made by the offense, the play is dead immediately and the offender is declared out, unless she has already scored. If the defense is responsible for the malicious contact, the offender is ejected at the end of playing action.

For state associations that have chosen to utilize a double first base, Rule 8-10 will now provide more detailed information.

“With more states permitting the use of a double first base, we thought it necessary to make some additions to clarify which player uses the white and colored portions of the base,” Struckhoff said.

The committee also identified Points of Emphasis for the 2007 season. Among those are concussions, batter delays, obstruction and interference, and inspection of equipment by umpires.

Softball is the fourth-most popular sport among girls at the high school level with 364,759 participants during the 2004-05 season, according to the High School Athletics Participation Survey conducted by the NFHS. It also ranks fourth in school sponsorship across the nation.

###

MEDIA CONTACT: Bruce Howard or John Gillis, 317-972-6900