

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE
HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS



NEWS RELEASE

Softball Pitching Distance to Increase to 43 Feet in 2010-11

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Mary Struckhoff

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (July 7, 2009) — Effective with the 2010-11 school year, the pitching distance for high school varsity softball pitchers will increase from 40 feet to 43 feet.

The new pitching distance was one of four rules revisions made by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Softball Rules Committee at its annual meeting June 8-10 in Indianapolis. The rules changes subsequently were approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

Although the new pitching distance is mandatory beginning with the 2010-11 school year, NFHS-member state high school associations may adopt the 43-foot distance in 2009-10, if desired.

After at least 10 years of debate by committee members, the NFHS has extended the fast-pitch pitching distance to 43 feet. The change to Rule 1-1-26 was made after two member state associations experimented with 43 feet – Florida for four years and Oregon for one year. Coaches surveyed within these states were overwhelmingly supportive of the change.

Creating a better balance between the offense and the defense was the major rationale for the rule change. Experimentation results from both states indicated more batted balls were hit into play.

“Our main thrust is getting the defense more involved,” said Mary Struckhoff, NFHS assistant director and liaison to the Softball Rules Committee. “When more balls are hit into play, the defense is more involved in the game, thus enhancing skill development.”

The second revision (Rule 1-5) concerned bat specifications. The majority of the text is simply reorganized from the current rules book.

“This is primarily an editorial change,” Struckhoff said. “We just want to be more detailed in our specifications in order to give manufacturers, coaches, players and umpires guidance on what is and is not permissible.”

Another rule revision for next season affects hair devices. An exception was added to Rule 3-2-12, permitting “hard, unadorned devices, such as bobby pins, barrettes and hair clips, no longer than 2 inches, to be worn to control a player’s hair.” The rule was changed to allow players more options.

“The exception allows players a practical way of dealing with their hair,” Struckhoff said. “The committee didn’t see that hair devices would be a nuisance or would pose undue risk to players.” The change also maintains consistency with NFHS volleyball rules regarding the same issue.

The final rules change concerns how a winning pitcher is determined. The committee altered Rule 9-6-6, changing the required number of innings pitched for a starting pitcher to be credited with a win to “half of the total number of innings played in the game.” The new language gives the starting pitcher the ability to earn a win even if she leaves the pitching position for another defensive position and returns as pitcher later in the game. It also allows greater clarity in determining the winning pitcher when a game is terminated due to the run-rule.

“Softball and baseball are different games and the requirements for a pitcher to be credited with a win should reflect those differences,” Struckhoff said. “In softball, it’s possible for the pitcher to pitch an inning, leave the position and then come back to pitch later in the same game. The change was made to reflect the culture of the sport.”

Softball is the fourth-most popular sport among girls at the high school level with 371,293 participants during the 2007-08 season, according to the High School Athletics Participation Survey conducted by the NFHS. It also ranks fourth in school sponsorship for girls across the nation with 14,846 participating schools.

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This press release was written by Bethany Julka, a summer intern in the NFHS Publications/Communications Department and a rising 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 nearly 19,000 high schools and 11 million participants in high school activity programs, including almost 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; 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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