

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE
HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS



NEWS RELEASE
High School Softball Rules Change
Enforces Stricter Penalty for Illegal Bats

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Mary Struckhoff

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (July 5, 2011) – The use of altered or non-approved bats in high school softball will draw an additional penalty for both players and coaches beginning with the 2012 season.

At its June 6-8 meeting in Indianapolis, the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Softball Rules Committee also clarified rules regarding ball color and the use of headwear during competition. All changes were subsequently approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

The penalty for the use of an altered or non-approved bat, which previously was an out on the batter, was expanded to state, “when the illegal bat is an altered or non-approved bat, the batter and the head coach are also ejected.”

“For blatant violations such as this, the committee wants to stress accountability for both coaches and players,” said Mary Struckhoff, NFHS assistant director and liaison to the Softball Rules Committee. “This is a very significant change since safety and integrity issues are at stake.”

The committee also deleted “white” from the list of permissible colors for softballs. The ball(s) must now be optic yellow, which will assist schools in ordering and manufacturers in producing the actual product being used for competition.

In Rule 3-2-5, “headwear (caps, visors, sweatbands, ribbons, etc.), if worn, must now be white, black, beige or school colors. The colors are not required to be solid nor the same for each team member.” Permitting more colors and options for players regarding headwear is consistent with requirements in other NFHS sports.

“The committee wants to allow student-athletes to have more flexibility,” Struckhoff said. “This change will also allow for players to promote more school spirit.”

The final rules change involves Rule 1-5-2a, which removes the requirement that the bat knob protrude at a 90-degree angle from the handle. The rule now states that each bat knob “may be molded, lathed, welded or permanently fastened. Devices, attachments or wrappings are permitted except those that cause the knob to become flush with the handle.”

“The committee is primarily concerned with the performance portion of the bat – the barrel – especially when other portions do not pose any undue risks to participants,” Struckhoff said.

Major editorial changes approved by the committee include:

- Rule 1-5-1c: Clarified that shaving, rolling or artificially warming the bat barrel are prohibited.
- Rule 2-4: Revised and updated the definitions of legal and illegal bats.
- Rules 2-5-3; 3-5-6; 7-5 New: 7-4-12; 8-6-15; 8-6-16: The rules were edited and updated to clarify offensive interference.
- Rule 3-2-12 Note: A new note was added authorizing state associations to grant exceptions to NFHS playing rules for participants with disabilities, special needs and/or extenuating circumstances.
- Rule 8-9-2 New Exception: Clarified the procedure to follow when the visiting pitcher or catcher of record, having used a courtesy runner in the top half of the first inning, is injured/disqualified and unable to play defense in the bottom half of the first.
- Rule 10-1-2 New Note: A note was added clarifying the administrative responsibilities of umpires through the completion of required reports.

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 “Softball.”

Softball is the fourth-most popular sport for girls at the high school level, according to the 2010-11 NFHS Athletics Participation Survey, with 378,211 participants nationwide. The sport ranks fourth in school sponsorship with 15,298 schools sponsoring the sport.

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This press release was written by Eamonn Reynolds, a summer intern in the NFHS Publications/Communications Department and a senior at Ohio 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 7.6 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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