

Rule changes approved for prep baseball, softball

Rule changes for the 2016 baseball and softball seasons were made at rules committee meetings last month in Indianapolis, Ind.

Those changes were subsequently approved by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Board of Directors.

For baseball, beginning with the 2016 season, umpires will be required to issue a warning to coaches before restriction to the bench/dugout or ejecting them as part of a new penalty progression to promote preventive officiating.

The revision to Rule 3-3-1 Penalty was one of two changes recommended by the NFHS Baseball Rules Committee at its June 7 meeting.

Previously, issuing a warning to an offending coach was optional for umpires, who will now restrict to the dugout or eject coaches who commit a violation after previously being warned for a minor offense.

However, coaches can still be ejected on a first offense if it is deemed to be major.

Also part of the modification to Rule 3-3-1 Penalty, coaches who receive a written

warning (Rule 10-2-3) will be restricted to the bench or dugout for the remainder of the game.

"The new rule change has initiated a penalty progression, starting with a written warning, restriction to the bench/dugout and subsequent ejection from the contest," said Elliot Hopkins, NFHS director of sports and student services and liaison to the Baseball Rules Committee.

The changes to Rule 3-3-1 Penalty will help to de-escalate contentious situations and allow coaches to dictate their status in the game by their

behavior, Hopkins said.

"A successful game official practices preventive officiating, and this new penalty progression will allow the official to issue penalties that give the coach the opportunity to remain in the game and teach his players."

The other change approved by the Baseball Rules Committee is an addition to Rule 3-3-1. Article "q" will state that a coach, player, substitute, attendant or other bench personnel shall not "have any physical contact, spitting, kicking of dirt or any other physical action directed toward an umpire."

The addition of article "q" serves to clarify other behaviors that would result in an ejection from the game, Hopkins said.

"Bad behavior that is being initiated from other levels has no place in education-based athletics and will not be tolerated," Hopkins said. "If we are

to continue to use sport to teach life lessons, then we have to ensure that appropriate behavior and conduct are modeled from those adults in the role of coach or teacher."

In addition to the two rules changes, the Baseball Rules Committee approved three Points of Emphasis for the 2016 season. Points of emphasis are developed by NFHS rules committees and should receive special focus and attention by officials, coaches, players, fans and other leaders within the high school setting.

For softball, one rule change was recommended by the NFHS Softball Rules Committee at its June 15 meeting. In the new Article 4 of Rule 2-57, the committee provided a standard definition of a "projected" substitute.

Rule 3-3-3 prohibits the use of a projected substitute, which is now defined in the

new article as "a player who does not immediately participate in the game."

"There has been some confusion among both officials and coaches about substitution procedure," said Theresia Wynns, NFHS director of sports and officials education and liaison to the Softball Rules Committee. "Therefore, the committee felt it was necessary to clear up that process and provide coaches and officials with a standard definition of a projected substitute."

According to the NFHS Athletics Participation Survey, baseball is the fourth-most popular sport for boys at the high school level with 482,629 participants in 15,789 schools.

Fast-pitch softball is the fifth-most popular sport for girls with 364,297 participants in 15,225 schools during the 2013-14 season.

— Submitted by Brandon Jones, intern for NFHS Publications.

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Siuslaw News

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garage sale GUIDE

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