

Safety concerns prompts changes to baseball, softball rules

Beginning Jan. 1, 2019, all balls used in high school baseball competition will be required to meet the NOCSAE (National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment) standard at the time of manufacture.

This revision in Rule 1-3-1 was one of the four changes recommended by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Baseball Rules Committee at its June 4-6 meeting in Indianapolis, Ind. All changes were subsequently approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

"We are excited that our membership will now have equipment that meets a standard that is consistent across the country," said Elliot Hopkins, NFHS director of sports and student services and staff liaison for baseball. "We are comfortable knowing that

all baseballs for high school play will be the same size, same weight and have similar playability."

The committee also revised Rule 1-5-3, which will require catchers to wear a chest protector that meets the NOCSAE standard at the time of manufacture, effective Jan. 1, 2020.

The NOCSAE standard has been developed to protect the heart and the cardiac silhouette from commotio cordis, which continues the committee's focus on minimizing risk of injury for players.

"Being aware that a standard exists to protect players, this decision was easy to make," Hopkins said. "When our catchers wear this chest protector, we are confident that the best protection for their heart is constructed into this equipment."

The Baseball Rules

Committee also modified Rule 1-3-2a2 regarding the components of a bat. The modified language states that bats "not have exposed rivets, pins, rough or sharp edges or any form of exterior fastener or attachment(s) that would present a potential hazard."

A modification was also made to Rule 8-2-7, which strikes the language preventing a player who is awarded first base on a base on balls the ability to over-run the base and return safely.

The following week, June 12-14, the NFHS Softball Rules Committee approved an addition to Rule 2 about intentional walks, along with three additions to Rule 3 regarding uniforms and equipment.

All recommended changes were subsequently approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

In Rule 2-65-2, the commit-

tee added language to include intentional walks into the fast-pitch game. The rule states that a request for an intentional walk can now be made prior to or during the at-bat by the defensive coach or catcher.

This change aligns fast-pitch and slow-pitch rules to keep up with current trends of the sports and maximize the flow of the game.

"The Kentucky High School Athletic Association experimented with intentional walks for the 2017 season, and the response from coaches and umpires was overwhelmingly positive," said Sandy Searcy, NFHS director of sports and staff liaison for softball. "The NFHS questionnaire response from constituents was also very favorable."

In another change, equipment no longer has to be inspected by the umpire or

placed outside the dugout/bench prior to the start of the game. The rules committee agreed that the responsibility for ensuring that players are legally and properly equipped rests with the head coach and school administration.

"Umpires must remain vigilant in identifying illegal or altered equipment throughout the course of the game, and equipment violation penalties will continue to be assessed when discovered," Searcy said. "However, it is the head coach's responsibility to verify that his or her players' equipment is legal."

The committee also approved an exception to Rule 3-2-7c which defines wristbands with a playbook/playcard attached as equipment.

The wristband shall be a single solid color other than optic yellow.

In Rule 3-7-1, a new note was added to clarify the number of pitches permitted for an incoming pitcher when the outgoing pitcher is removed by rule or injury. This change was made in order to minimize risk for the incoming pitcher.

The committee also revised Rule 6-1-2b by permitting the pitcher to step backward with the non-pivot foot at any time prior to start of the pitch.

This change is less restrictive than the previous rule, and allows for a more fluid sequence of motion and will aid the development of pitchers.

A complete listing of the baseball rules changes will be available on the NFHS website at www.nfhs.org. Click on "Activities & Sports" at the top of the home page, and select the appropriate sport.

ODOT offers travel tips as eclipse approaches

Oregon will experience quite a show next month when the moon's shadow cast by a solar eclipse begins its 2,500-mile-per-hour journey across the United States.

But if the predicted one million visitors in Oregon's path of totality for the Aug. 21 eclipse don't properly prepare or aren't paying attention, that show won't be the celestial dance they came for. It'll be a cosmic traffic jam on the roads below.

ODOT is expecting many Oregon highways will be espe-

cially crowded in the days around the eclipse. When traveling, drivers should keep their hands on the wheel, their mind on the task, and their eyes on the road — not on the sky.

ODOT is encouraging drivers to avoid unnecessary distractions during their travels. That means making travel plans well in advance; knowing where you're going; and for long trips, knowing where you're going to go when the need arises.

ODOT will have crews posted along critical travel routes to

keep motorists mobile and safe, and will be providing travel updates via Tripcheck.com and 511 so travelers can be prepared with the most current travel information available.

When properly supplied and informed, everyone can avoid becoming "highway luna(r)-tics" during the eclipse.

Travellers should:

- Expect traffic changes. ODOT does not plan to close any state highways. But as traffic volumes increase, ODOT may restrict some left turns to and from highways in order to

keep traffic moving.

Cities and counties may choose to do the same thing on their streets and roads.

- Help keep roads clear. Staying off the roads helps make sure emergency service vehicles can get through. Take care of errands well before Aug. 21. Limit trips to help keep the roads clear.

- Travel with friends. Joining friends and family for the trip to totality will reduce the number of cars on the road.

Find carpool information at www.drivelessconnect.com.

Coastal Gem Walkers announce August junts

The Coastal Gems Volkswalkers invites the public to come walking with Tuesday, Aug. 1, at the Lincoln City Beach YRE in Lincoln City.

The group will meet at the Cozy Cove Resort, 515 NW Inlet Ave., at 10 a.m. to register. Those who would like to carpool can meet at the Commons in Yachats for a 9 a.m. departure.

This 10K walk is all on the

beach from D River to Road's End and back; it is not appropriate for wheelchairs or strollers.

As always, leashed pets are welcome on walks, but be sure to bring water and clean up materials for pets. A sturdy 6-foot leash — not the retractable type — is required.

For more information or directions, call Maryann Brown in Waldport at 541-961-4279.

Timeout from 1B

A year later, we were playing a football game against our rivals, the Seaside Seagulls. Our team was driving for the potential winning touchdown when I took a blow to my helmet.

During the huddle, a teammate noticed a confused look on my face and called timeout so I could be walked to the sidelines.

In those days, an ammonia capsule was broken and waved under my nose to "clear out the cobwebs." I missed one play and returned to the game, where we secured just our second win of the season with a score on the drive.

If this happened today, I would be subjected to a concussion protocol and probably be out of that game and the next.

Injuries happen at any time to any athlete. If they are motivated to return to action — pro-

viding the injury is painful but not serious — it's a personal choice.

When Chip Kelley introduced an up tempo offense at Oregon, he inadvertently caused multiple defensive injuries as well. Real or "faked," the injuries disrupted the offense.

When the "injured" player returned, sometimes during the same drive, the slow-down tactic was copied against other up tempo teams in college foot-

ball.

When I coached football, I explained to players my philosophy on game day injuries by telling them football is a collision sport.

Some hits will hurt. If you think you have been injured and I come on the field to attend to you, you are done playing for that game.

While coaching in Spray, Ore., one of my toughest players got hit low. He stayed down and, even as I approached him,

he was struggling to get up because he did not want to come out of this tightly contested game.

When I arrived, players were pointing to his ankle and it was obvious Gary was done for the day. Gary was loaded into the back of a pick-up truck and taken to the John Day Hospital.

His ankle was dislocated and broken. When I asked how he was, he said, "I would have scored, coach."

Today, many decisions on

whether a player may return to the game are no longer left in the hands of players, coaches or parents. During my years of coaching, I witnessed several players play with minor injuries effectively — and with no lasting effects.

Vince Lombardi, long time successful Green Bay Packer coach, once said "There is no gain without pain."

Injuries will happen. How you respond is a personal choice.

Salmon from 1B

A total of 614,000 Chinook are expected to enter the Columbia this fall, which is slightly less than last year's actual return of 642,000 returning Chinook.

The Buoy 10 fishery is the first Columbia River area that will encounter returning fall salmon. Effort and catch in other sections of the mainstem will build as the season progresses. Chinook retention seasons will vary by area to remain within harvest quotas.

Coho returns are predicted to be improved this year, with 319,000 adult coho expected to enter the river mouth, ver-

sus last year's actual return of 196,000. Hatchery coho retention is expected to remain open throughout the fall season.

The Buoy 10 fishery is scheduled to be open for retention of any adult Chinook salmon through Sept. 4 with a two fish/one Chinook daily adult bag limit. Chinook retention is expected to be closed during Sept. 5-30.

From Tongue Point upstream to Warrior Rock, retention of any Chinook will be allowed through Sept. 7, with a two fish/one Chinook daily adult bag limit.

Chinook retention will continue from Sept. 8-14, but only for hatchery Chinook.



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