

New rule permits facial and head protection for high school baseball

At its annual meeting June 17-18 in Indianapolis, IN, the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Baseball Rules Committee adopted a new rule that permits the pitcher or defensive players to wear non-glare facial or head protection while on the field. Rule 1-5-5, which is designed to minimize risk of injury, was one of 12 rules addressed at the meeting.

"In the few occasions that pitchers are hit by the ball, most of the occurrences are above the neck," said B. Elliot Hopkins, NFHS assistant director and liaison to the NFHS Baseball Rules Committee. "The committee felt that players who want to wear protection should be able to."

In other changes, Rule 1-3-6 was revised to eliminate the confusion this past season with the legality of two-toned gloves. The modification bans any white or gray colors on the glove or mitt worn by the pitchers. This rule was revised due to the popularity of two-toned gloves, which typically have not been distracting.

As a means of providing additional coverage to the definition of a foul ball, Rule 2-16-1e was

added. It states that a ball inadvertently declared foul by an umpire that touches the ground is a dead ball.

The committee also revised Rule 2-10-2, which now mandates a meeting involving the umpires, both head coaches and team captains (if available) near home plate before each game. "Good sportsmanship is the rationale behind the pregame conference," said NFHS Baseball Rules Committee Chairman Greg Brewer, assistant director of the Alabama High School Athletic Association. "We want to make sure everyone is properly uniformed, understands the rules and that there is no miscommunication between the umpires and the teams."

Eight other minor changes were approved by the committee, including two involving baserunning rules and two revisions to dead-ball rules.

Baseball is the fourth-most popular sport among boys at the high school level with 457,146 participants during the 2003-04 season, according to the High School Athletics Participation Survey conducted by the NFHS. It also ranks third in school sponsorship with 14,984 schools offering the sport.

Morrow County EMS to hold poker run and barbeque

Morrow County EMS is hosting a poker run and barbeque on Aug. 13 and 14 at the Morrow County OHV Park. This is a fundraising event for emergency medical services at the OHV Park. The poker run and barbeque will be held on Aug. 13, but all are invited to show their support

of EMS efforts by staying and playing on Aug. 14.

Registration for the poker run will begin at 9 a.m., with the run held at 11 a.m. The barbeque will begin at 3 p.m. Prices for the event are \$15 per person or \$40 per family, children 12 and under are \$10, and barbeque only is \$5.

Penalty established for illegal equipment in high school softball

The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Softball Rules Committee approved a new penalty for non-compliance or illegal equipment at its annual meeting June 18-20 in Indianapolis, IN.

Rule 3-5-1 will now require the head coach to attend the pregame conference to verify the team is legally and properly equipped. The first offense will result in the equipment being removed and a team warning being issued. A subsequent offense, by anyone on the team, will result in a dugout/bench restriction for the offender and head coach.

"Coaches should be responsible for their players and equipment," said Mary Struckhoff, NFHS assistant director and liaison to the NFHS Softball Rules Committee. "By adding a penalty, the committee hopes to make the coach more accountable and take greater steps in ensuring player compliance."

In other action, the committee approved a new rule to penalize a coach or player for intentionally removing the lines of the batter's box to gain an advantage for the team's "slap hitter." With the implementation of Rule 3-6-19, a strike shall be called on the batter if a member of the offense intentionally removes the line, and a ball awarded to the batter if a member of the defense intentionally erases the line. A team warning will also be issued. Any subsequent infraction will result in the head coach being restricted to the bench/dugout for the remainder of the game.

A strike will now be called when a pitched ball

hits the batter and is prevented from entering the strike zone, according to new Rule 7-2-1h. "The offensive team should not benefit with a "ball" or a "no pitch" called when the batter prevents the pitch from entering the strike zone and is hit by the pitch in front of the plate. This rule change helps maintain the balance between offense and defense," Struckhoff said. "The call will be made at the umpire's discretion."

The last major change affects Rule 7-4-1k, which pertains to the bat hitting the ball a second time outside the batter's box. The committee decided to remove a prior revision and return to the original rule of calling the batter out if the bat hits the ball a second time on or over fair territory outside the batter's box.

"A lot of these changes were implemented because we felt some issues of the game were contrary to the spirit of fair play," said NFHS Softball Rules Committee Chairman Ralph Swearngin, executive director of the Georgia High School Association. "We're hoping these new penalties will serve as a deterrent and make them stop."

"To have only four rules changes this year is a good thing. It's reassuring to know interscholastic softball is in good shape."

Softball is the fourth-most popular sport for girls at the high school level with 362,468 participants during the 2003-04 season, according to the High School Athletics Participation Survey conducted by the NFHS. It also ranks tied for third in school sponsorship for girls, with 14,181 schools offering the sport.

New high school track and field rule reduces pole vault liability

At its June 27-28 annual meeting in San Antonio, TX, the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Track and Field Rules Committee added a new rule requiring coaches to verify that their pole vault participants' equipment meets requirements prior to competition.

Rule 7-5-3 calls for a procedure that will ensure that the standard is met prior to participation at each meet, thereby reducing liability for coaches. Each state association will determine its own verification procedure.

"We're enforcing this in the spirit of fair play. We want to reduce the risk of vaulting with an inappropriate pole," said Cynthia Doyle, NFHS assistant director and liaison to the NFHS Track and Field Rules Committee.

In other changes, Rules 6-4-5, 6-4-8 and 6-5-1 were modified to require all references and diagrams to reflect one standard sector at 34.92 degrees for shot put and discus competitions, effective 2006-07. By having a common sector for the shot and discus, competitors will not have to guess which sector will be used for competition. The smaller, 34.92-degree sector requires better control of the implements, reduces risk to

spectators and is easier to lay out for meet administrators.

"The NFHS questionnaire suggested we implement the change in sector," said NFHS Track and Field Rules Committee Chairman Mike Colbrese, executive director of the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association. "This minimizes risk to athletes and to spectators alike by encouraging good throwing technique and exerting better control."

Although the sector is minimized, spectators will still be expected to keep their distance from the throwing area.

The committee also stressed the importance of marking curved lines for alley starts, using computerized chips in the absence of a finish judge, and measuring from the "zero point" in pole vault competition.

Track and field is the third-most popular sport among boys and the second-most popular sport among girls at the high school level with 923,123 combined participants during the 2003-04 season, according to the High School Athletics Participation Survey conducted by the NFHS. It also ranks second in school sponsorship for both boys and girls.

Recent lightning activity keeps local firefighters busy

Twenty-seven fire incidents have been reported to the Pendleton Interagency Communication Center (PICC) as a result of lightning activity occurring over the weekend of July 30-31. Of the 27 incidents, 16 are located on Umatilla National Forest lands, three on Oregon Department of Forestry protected lands, and eight were turned over to other fire protection agencies.

Most of these fires consist of burning snags or brush and are small in size. "We were aggressive in our firefighting efforts," said Brian Goff, Fire/Fuels Specialist for the Umatilla National Forest. "Our strategy is to hit these fires hard, with both aerial and ground support, and keep them small. Initial attack is our top priority and our initial attack firefighters are doing a tremendous job."

"Our focus today [Aug. 3] is on the containment of three small fires located on the Heppner Ranger District and known as the Potamus Complex," said Goff. The three fires total 65 acres in size and are burning in a mixture of grassy, open areas that burn rapidly and dense, timbered areas that burn hot. "These fires are located in a remote area with limited access," said Goff. "Our firefighters are dealing with the rough, steep terrain; hot, dry weather conditions, and an abundance of yellow jacket nests."

At this time, over 100 firefighters are assigned to the Potamus Complex. Resources include three 20-person firefighting crews, two 20-person hotshot crews, eight smokejumpers from the Grangeville Air Center and miscellaneous overhead. Aerial support this week has included two single-engine air tankers, two large air tankers, an air attack coordinator and a medium size Type II helicopter.

"We are fortunate to be working with several local agencies and neighboring forests across the Blue Mountains. Our daily communication and coordination has allowed us to share firefighting resources to best meet all of our needs," said Goff.

"With continued hot and dry weather conditions in the forecast, we'd like to remind everyone that public-use restrictions are in effect throughout the area," said David King, Unit Forester for the Oregon Department of Forestry's Pendleton Unit. "The fire danger is very high and it's only early August. We ask the public to be very careful when recreating or working in the woods," said King.

The public is urged to check with local land management agencies to see what restrictions are in effect before heading out. "Fire prevention is our ultimate goal," said King. "We would prefer to avoid fires than to fight fires."

If unsure of which restrictions apply, please contact any Umatilla National Forest or Oregon Department of Forestry Office. Specific regulations are available online at: www.fs.fed.us/r6/uma/fire/fireupdate.shtml.

Ranch Horse contest winners announced

The Ranch Horse fair contest was held Thursday, Aug. 4 in Boardman. Winners included: Makayla Anderson- Champion; Bryce Doherty- Champion; Whitley Reece- Champion; Ashley Anderson- Blue; Kelli Jones- Blue; Casey McClure- Blue; Jessica Hamilton- Red; Edward Waddell- Red; Richard Waddell- Red; and Samantha Waddell- Red.

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INWM opens new business office

Inland Northwest Musicians announces a new location for their main business office. The new facility is located at 322 S.W. 3rd Street, Suite #1, in Pendleton. Staff will welcome and assist visitors and those seeking information about season presentations.

This is the office for five ensembles operating under the direction of INWM conductor and music director R. Lee Friese of Athena. The groups are Inland Northwest Symphony Orchestra, Inland Northwest Symphony Chorale, Willow Creek Symphony, Willow Creek Singers and the newly organized Wallowa Valley Orchestra.

Players and singers

of all abilities are welcome to contact INWM concerning the opportunity to join in the enjoyment of performing classical music.

Inquiries concerning season offerings or rehearsal sites and schedules can be made at the office, or by calling (541) 966-6649 or (541) 240-0600.

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