



2017 Softball Rules Changes

1-5-2c Taper. The taper is the transition area which connects the narrower handle to the wider barrel portion of the bat. The taper shall have a ~~solid surface and shall have a~~ conical shape. Its length and material may vary.

Rationale: This change brings the NFHS in line with other rules codes concerning the surface of the taper.

3-2-1 **ART. 1 . . .** Uniforms of all team members shall be of the same color and style. State associations may, on an individual basis, permit a player to participate while wearing a different style uniform for religious reasons, inclement weather, etc.

Rationale: There may be circumstances in which state associations make accommodations relative to inclement weather, religious exceptions, or other situations.

3-2-7 **ART. 7 . . .** Exposed undergarments, if worn, are considered part of the official uniform. All exposed undergarments shall be a solid single color: black, white, gray or a solid school color.

- For individual players, exposed upper-body undergarments do not have to be the same color as exposed lower-body undergarments.
- ~~Among players~~ For all team members, all exposed upper-body undergarments shall be the same solid single color, and all exposed lower-body undergarments shall be the same solid single color.
- Garments other than team uniforms such as arm sleeves, leg sleeves, and tights are permissible. Anything worn on the arm or leg is a sleeve, except a brace, and shall meet the color restrictions.

Rationale: Multi-color undergarments and sleeves are a distraction and create a possible safety concern. This rule establishes solid color requirements similar to other NFHS sport rules.

3-2-15 NEW **ART. 15 . . .** All equipment shall be inspected by the umpire, and is to be placed outside the dugout/bench prior to the start of the game.

Rationale: Placing all equipment in one location at one time is a more efficient method to conduct this inspection.

3-6-7 **ART. 7 . . .** Players and substitutes shall not enter the contest unreported.

PENALTY: (Arts. 2 through 10) The umpire shall issue a team warning to the coach of the team involved and the next offender on that team shall be restricted to the dugout/bench for the remainder of the game. (Art. 2) A fake tag without the ball is obstruction (8-4-3b). (Art. 7) The head coach is also restricted to the dugout/bench for the remainder of the game for a second violation. (Arts. 8, 9, 10) For coaches who violate, depending on the severity of the act, the umpire may issue a warning, restrict the offender to bench/dugout for the remainder of the game or eject the offender.

Rationale: Language in the Article 7 penalty was not clear as to when the coach is restricted. This added statement makes it clear that the coach is only restricted on the second offense.

2017 Softball Editorial Changes

6-2-2 **ART. 2 . . .** The pitcher shall not at any time during the game be allowed to use tape or any other substance on the ball or contact points of the pitching hand or fingers; nor shall any other player apply a foreign substance to the ball. A pitcher who licks her fingers shall wipe them off before bringing them in contact with the ball. Under the supervision and control of the umpire, powdered resin or any comparable drying agent may be used to dry the hand. It is not necessary to wipe off the drying agent before making contact with the ball. The pitcher shall not wear any item on the pitching hand, wrist, arm or thighs which the umpire judges to be distracting to the batter.

Rationale: Confusion exists regarding whether drying agents must be removed from the hand before making contact with the ball. This language clarifies the rule.

7-4-8 NOTE **ART. 8 . . .** The batter hits the ball fair or foul while either foot is touching the ground completely outside the lines of the batter's box or while touching the plate.

~~**NOTE:** A follow-through with the bat may carry one of the batter's feet entirely outside the box so it touches the ground as the ball is leaving the bat. It is customary for the umpire to ignore this if both feet were in legal position at the start of the swing and if it is not considered an attempt to circumvent the spirit of the rule.~~

Rationale: The note does not clarify the rule, and often creates confusion in the administration of the rule.

8-1-2 b. (F.P.) a pitched ball is entirely within the batter's box and it strikes the batter or her clothing. No attempt to avoid being hit by the pitch is required. However, the batter may not obviously try to get hit by the pitch.
c. (F.P.) a pitched ball (not entirely in the batter's box) not swung at nor called a strike touches any part of the batter's person or clothing. It does not matter if the ball strikes the ground before hitting the batter. The batter's hands are not to be considered part of the bat.

Rationale: Language that was originally inserted in 2013 was inadvertently omitted.

8-2-4
Exception The batter-runner shall be called out when:

ART. 4 . . . The batter-runner fails to advance to first base and enters the dugout/bench area after a batted fair ball, a base on balls, a hit batter (F.P.), a dropped third strike (F.P.), or catcher obstruction.

EXCEPTION: ~~(S.P.)~~ The ball is dead on a base on balls (S.P.), or on a hit batter who is injured (F.P.), the ball is dead, the batter-runner is not out and runners cannot advance unless forced.

Rationale: Rule 8-2-4 states that the batter is out if the player does not advance to first base and enters the dugout/bench area after being hit by the pitch. The exception (F.P) excludes a batter who enters the dugout because the player was injured by a pitched ball. The change clarifies language in the exception.

2017 NFHS Points of Emphasis

1. Pitching
2. Uniforms
3. DP/FLEX