

**Updated**  
**MOA SOFTBALL STUDY CLUBS**  
**2023**  
**LESSON #1**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

CLUB \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

1. Review and discuss the following **2023 Rule Changes for Softball** and the information concerning this change for softball. (Please see comments on the rules change in the Rule Book, page 87, for further information and rationale for each rule change.)

**1-4-1:** Removes the number of color restrictions on a glove, including laces and seams, and does not allow any panels of the glove to match the color of the ball.

**Rationale:** Gloves and mitts are manufactured in variety of designs and multiple colors. As long as the color of the ball is not one of the colors used, does not have markings that give the appearance of the ball or are made in a manner that is judged distracting by the umpire it is permitted for use in NFHS Softball.

**2-20-1g:** A fair ball is a batted ball that while over fair territory, an offensive player interferes with a defensive player attempting to field a batted ball.

**Rationale:** The ball's status is determined at the point of interference. If an offensive player interferes with the defensive player while the ball is in fair territory, the ball is dead. Adding this language to the definition section mirrors the foul ball definition in Rule 2-25-1e

**4-2-1:** Defines the protocol for when a fair batted ball clears the home run fence to end the game. All runs are allowed to score before the game is terminated.

**Rationale:** Allows for all runs to be counted when a fair batted ball clears the home run fence to end the game. All runs scored by virtue of the home run will be included in individual and team statistics.

**8-2-7:** New language clarifies batter-runner interference on a fly ball over foul territory.

**Rationale:** This has always been the enforcement but was not listed in the section covering batter-runner. The language is consistent with the rule covering interference on an initial play on a fair-batted ball and aligns with Rule 8-6-10.

2. Please review and discuss the following information in the **NFHS Softball Preseason Guide 2023** concerning the new rule changes this year - this study guide was mailed in February:

- **New rule changes articles are on pages 1 and 2 of the Preseason Guide**

3. Please review the **2023 Major Editorial Revisions for Softball**

- **Listed on page 3 of the NFHS Softball Rules Book**

4. **MHSA softball rules clarification reminder:**

**\*\*Class AA Only**

- Class AA programs are allowed to schedule varsity and JV contests at the same time a maximum of four times during the regular season.
- Class AA players are allowed to participate in a maximum of 9 innings when JV and varsity contests are played at different times for a one-game series. Programs with low roster numbers may appeal to the MHSA to allow players to participate in more than 9 innings to provide JV opportunities.
- There is no time limit on sub-varsity contests in Class AA softball. It is recommended that Class AA programs play varsity contests first, followed by the JV game.

- **Pitcher – 1<sup>st</sup> Base and 3<sup>rd</sup> Base Must Wear a Mask (they cannot participate without a mask)**
- **Pitcher – the starting varsity pitcher cannot pitch in the JV game**

5.. Please review the **Major Mechanics Changes (2022-2023 Two Year Manual)** – this is the second year of this manual. This was not sent out to all officials. If you need any, please email me as I have some on hand of the MHSA/MOA Office.

6. Please review and discuss last year's rule changes, major editorial revisions, and major mechanics revisions. Were there any problems, concerns, or unusual situations caused by these changes?

**Rule Changes (2022)**

Clarifies bases maybe be designated from their anchor system.

**1-3-3** Aligns ball tolerance specifications with other rules codes.

**3-2-5b** Removes the language prohibiting hard items to control the hair in the sport of softball.

**3-2-5c** Permits players to wear soft and secure headwear for religious purposes without prior state association approval.

**3-5-3** When in live ball areas, a coach shall be attired in a school uniform or jersey/coaching shirt with slacks, shorts or other leg coverings in school colors or colors of khaki, black, white or gray.

**3-6-21, 3-6-21 PENALTY** Establishes the penalty when a damaged bat that was previously removed is re-introduced into the game.

**6-2-2, 6-2-2 NOTE (NEW)** Removed language from Rule 6-2-2 and places it as a NOTE under the PENALTY

**8-2-6** Clarifies that a runner is considered outside the running lane when either foot last contacting the ground is completely outside the lane.

Please review the information in the **NFHS Softball Guide 2023** concerning the 2023 rule changes - this study guide was mailed in early February:

- **Flashback: Recent Rule Changes – pages 5**

Please review some of the recent major editorial revisions:

**Appendix H – An Appendix regarding DP/Flex rules was added for quick reference pg. 98**

7. The NFHS Softball Rules Committee has identified four points for emphasis this year. These points of emphasis will be discussed during the online Softball Rules Clinic but please review and discuss these points of emphasis as a group.

**Please review the comments for each point of emphasis listed in the Rule Book, pages 86-87:**

- 1) Sportsmanship
- 2) Time Between Innings
- 3) Jewelry and Electronic Communication – **See MHSA Jewelry Policy as it does not match the new NFHS rules.**
- 4) Comparable Drying Agents

Please review the articles in the **NFHS Softball Guide 2023** on these important points of emphasis:

### **Please review the Points of Emphasis from Last Year and Two Years Ago**

#### **NFHS Points of Emphasis – 2021**

- Huddles Between Innings
- Guidance for Pitcher Utilization
- Assisting a Runner
- Pitcher Stimulating Taking a Sign

#### **NFHS Points of Emphasis – 2020**

- Bat Certification
- Inspection of equipment
- Damaged bat vs. illegal bat penalties
- Contact with the pitcher's plate

8. **Concussion Law** – Remember you must view the NFHS Concussion Course before umpiring any scrimmage or game (State Law and MOA Requirement). Review once again the MHSA procedure for MOA officials to follow regarding these concussions and other injuries (this information is provided in the addendum to these study clubs after Study Club # 4).

- 9.. Review once again the **DP/Flex Rule** (this information is provided in the addendum to these study clubs after Study Club # 4).

Provided to Pool Leaders was a NFHS DP/Flex PowerPoint

**Also, Appendix H has been added to the Softball Rules Book – DP/Flex Simplified Reminders on page 98**

**Also, the following link provides information on new ways to teach the DP/Flex Rule:**

[https://youtu.be/upb82R\\_JczM](https://youtu.be/upb82R_JczM)

10. **Please review and discuss the following 2023 NFHS Softball Rules Interpretations:**

**Publisher's Note:** The National Federation of State High School Associations is the only source of official high school interpretations. They do not set aside nor modify any rule. They are made and published by the NFHS in response to situations presented. Dr. Karissa L. Niehoff, Publisher, NFHS Publications © 2023

**SITUATION 1:** In the bottom of the first inning, a spectator becomes unruly and begins shouting obscene language at the players and umpires. The plate umpire confronts and ejects the spectator while instructing the spectator to leave the facility.

**RULING:** Incorrect procedure. Umpire jurisdiction is limited to the confines of the field and covers issues with players, coaches and bench personnel. Site administration has the responsibility for dealing with unruly spectators. In this situation, the umpire should have contacted the site administrator to deal with the unruly spectator. If the designated site administrator or another person of authority from the host school is not immediately available, these duties fall upon the home team's head coach if the coach is the only representative of the host school present.

**SITUATION 3:** Team B's pitcher is wearing a smartwatch. In the third inning, the umpire notices F1 receiving signals via text from the coach in the dugout. The umpire stops the game before a pitch is thrown and informs Team B's coach that the player is violating the rule prohibiting use of electronic devices for coaching purposes outside of the dugout. Team B's coach disagrees, telling the umpire that F1 is not transmitting data, only receiving the data so it is not a violation. The umpire informs the coach that the player has violated the rule, and this is F1's warning. The pitcher must discontinue use of the smartwatch or F1 will be ejected.

**RULING:** Correct ruling. Rule 1-8-6 allows team personnel to transmit information only within the team's dugout/bench area. Transmission of data requires an individual to send the signal to a player who receives that transmission. F1 is receiving the data outside of the dugout/bench area and is in violation of Rule 1-8-6. Rule 3-6-11 also covers this topic and is even more clear in its wording. This rule states that electronic devices used for coaching purposes may be used only within the dugout/bench area. Obtaining a signal for what pitch to throw is clearly a coaching purpose and F1 is also clearly outside of the dugout/bench area when receiving that signal. For violating Rule 3-6-11, it is umpire discretion as to the severity of the offense. If it is judged to be a minor infraction, the umpire may warn the offender or the umpire may eject the offender for the first offense. In this case,

the umpire judged the offense to be minor and gave a warning since play was stopped prior to F1 throwing the pitch that had been illegally received. (1-8-6, 3-6-11)

**SITUATION 4:** R1 of Team B is called out while attempting to steal home on a close play at the plate. After Team B's head coach consults with an assistant coach near the dugout, footage from a tablet on the close play at the plate is shared with the umpire. As the coach is showing the video to the umpire, it is evident to the umpire that the camera angle of the video is from behind home plate. The umpire ejects the coach for violating the rule prohibiting the use of electronic equipment outside of the dugout.

**RULING:** Correct ruling. Currently, the rules state that recording and using the footage for coaching purposes during the game is only permitted within the team's dugout/ bench area. Although an umpire should not examine dugouts to determine how a team is utilizing electronic equipment, in this situation, the coach brought the video to the umpire's attention and, therefore, the umpire must enforce the rule. In addition to the improper use of electronic equipment, use of video to review a play with an umpire is not permissible in NFHS Softball. (1-8-6, 3-6-11, 10-1-4)

**Completed outline must be signed by all present and sent to the regional director  
by May 15, 2023**

**MOA SOFTBALL STUDY CLUBS**  
**2023**  
**LESSON #2**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

CLUB \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

1. Please discuss and review the following information on a variety of topics from the **NFHS Softball Guide 2023**:

- **Softball Injury Surveillance Study – page 6**
- **Break It Up – page 6-7**
- **Get Out ff the Way – page 7-8**
- **Talk the Talk – page 8**
- **Teamwork Makes The Dream Work – page 10-11**
- **Catch and Release – page 12**
- **No Lollygagging – page – 13**
- **First Base Barricade – page 14**
- **Timing is Everything – page 15**
- **Point Made – page 16**

**Reminder**

- **No Buckets Allowed – page 6 – this article encourages umpires not to allow coaches to sit on buckets in live ball territory.**  
**MHSA Policy – it is against the rules of the game, and it is a huge liability issue – Do not allow coaches to sit on buckets (or be in) live ball areas giving signals.**

**2.Pitching Information –**

Games hampered with light precipitation can often pose problems for pitchers, who are allowed to use a towel or approved drying agents to dry the pitching hand. An umpire's judgment comes into play under a few wet-weather circumstances. A pitcher is allowed to use a towel, as long as, in the umpire's judgment, it is not distracting to the batter. A towel that is tucked in the pitcher's waist in front facing the batter and flopping around is likely to be more distracting than if it is tucked in her back pocket or in her waist in back. NFHS rules allow the pitcher to use powdered resin or any comparable drying agent to dry the hands. The resin applied to the pitcher's hands and fingers does not have to be wiped off prior to throwing a pitch.

- ❖ **Once again, information that has been shared with coaches and umpires for many years regarding pitching is provided in the addendum to these study clubs after Study Club # 4.**

3.Orally, as a group, take the following 2023 Softball Rules Exam – Part II. Discuss any problem areas and please note the questions that may be affected by this year's rule changes.

NOTE: In the exam situations, F refers to a fielder, B refers to a batter and R refers to a runner. All situations and acts are legal, and no errors or mistakes are involved unless otherwise noted.



## 2023 NFHS Softball Part II Test

NOTE: In the exam situations, F refers to a fielder, B refers to a batter and R refers to a runner. All situations and acts are legal, and no errors or mistakes are involved unless otherwise noted.

1. The ball becomes dead in all of the following situations, EXCEPT:
  - A. There is interference by a runner or retired runner.
  - B. The batter enters the batter's box with an illegal bat.
  - C. An infielder intentionally drops a fair fly ball with first base occupied and less than two outs.
  - D. An illegal pitch is delivered.
  - E. The batter-runner steps backward toward home plate to avoid being tagged. out.
  
2. B3 erroneously bats out of order in place of B2. The error is discovered by the opposing team while B3 is at bat with a 3 ball-2 strike count. The correct ruling is:
  - A. B3 is declared out.
  - B. B2 replaces B3 and assumes the 3-2 count.
  - C. B3 is allowed to finish the at-bat.
  - D. B2 replaces B3 and starts with a new count since B2 hasn't received any pitches.
  
3. B1 bats out of order and reaches first base. F1 then steps onto the pitcher's plate and commits an illegal pitch. The defense then appeals that B1 has batted out of order. What is the correct ruling?
  - A. B1 is declared out and the next batter comes to the plate.
  - B. B1 is replaced by the legal batter at first base.
  - C. The defense can no longer appeal batting out of order since the infraction was not appealed prior to the next pitch.

- D. The defense is allowed to appeal since the pitch was illegal and the player that B1 batted in place of is called out.
4. B1 fails to promptly take a position in the batter's box within the 10 seconds after the ball is returned to the pitcher to prepare for the next pitch. What is the correct ruling?
- A. The umpire awards an additional five seconds and play continues.
  - B. The umpire grants the batter time until the batter is ready for play to resume.
  - C. The umpire declares the batter out for delaying the game.
  - D. The umpire calls a strike on the batter.
5. The batter is standing in the batter's box when an inside pitch hits the batter in the knee completely in the batter's box. The proper call is:
- A. Dead ball and the batter is awarded first base.
  - B. Strike on the batter because the batter needs to make an effort to get out of the way of the pitch.
  - C. Strike on the batter because the pitcher is entitled to throw over the inner part of the batter's box.
  - D. None of the above.
6. The penalty for using an altered bat includes all of the following, EXCEPT:
- A. The coach is ejected.
  - B. The batter is ejected.
  - C. The batter is out.
  - D. The coach is restricted to the dugout/bench for the remainder of the game.
7. B1 hits a dribbler a few feet down the first-base line. F2 fields the ball and doesn't throw because B1 is outside the running lane and in the way of a potential throw.
- A. Plate umpire calls dead ball and B1 is out for interference.
  - B. Plate umpire indicates the ball is fair. There is no interference by B1.
  - C. Plate umpire signals delayed dead ball. At the end of the play, if the umpire judges that F2 could have made an out, call B1 out for interference.
  - D. Plate umpire calls dead ball and issues a warning to the offense for being outside the running lane.
8. R1 is on first base with one out. B2 hits a long fly ball to left field. The ball is over foul territory when first touched and is dropped by F7. On the fly ball, R1 touched second base and was moving to third base as the ball was dropped. R1 shall:
- A. Retrace the path retouching second base before returning to first.
  - B. Be awarded second base, as it was legally achieved while the ball was over fair territory.
  - C. Return to first base with or without retouching bases since it is ruled a foul ball.
  - D. Retouch first base before the ball gets to the pitching circle.



9. With one out, R1 on third base and R2 on second base, B4 hits a fly ball on the first-base side of second base almost directly at F4. As R2 takes a couple of steps toward third base, she makes contact with F6, who is moving toward the batted ball.
- A. The umpire signals and verbalizes "dead ball"; R2 is out for interfering with F6's opportunity to make an initial play on a batted ball.
  - B. The umpire signals and verbalizes "dead ball"; R2 is out for interfering with F6's opportunity to make a live-ball appeal of R2 leaving early if the fly ball is caught.
  - C. The umpire makes no call; this is nothing more than a "train wreck" with both players doing what they were supposed to do.
  - D. The umpire signals delayed dead ball and verbalizes "Obstruction." F6 is guilty of obstructing R2.
10. With no outs and R1 on first base, B2 hits a ground ball on the first-base side of the infield. F4 moves into the baseline to make an initial play on a batted ball. R1, using normal movement, alters the base path going either behind or in front of F4 to avoid contact with F4 fielding the ball. The correct call is:
- A. The umpire signals obstruction on F4 for causing R1 to alter the path. Awarding R1 the base that would have been achieved had it not been for the obstruction on F4.
  - B. If R1 runs in front of F4, the umpire should signal dead ball and call interference because R1 is never allowed to run in front of F4 when F4 is making an initial play on a batted ball.
  - C. R1's movement is to avoid interfering with a fielder attempting to make the initial play on a batted ball, so as long as in the umpire's judgment there is not interference, this is a legal play.
  - D. R1 is called out because R1 is not allowed to alter the base path. R1 must stop to avoid contacting F4 making the initial play on a batted ball.
11. All of the following team personnel are permitted outside the designated dugout/bench, EXCEPT:
- A. The batter.
  - B. Runners on base.
  - C. The on-deck batter.
  - D. Defensive players.
  - E. The coach giving defensive signals.
12. B1, identified on the lineup card as the pitcher, reaches base in the top of the first inning and a courtesy runner is used. As B1 goes to take the pitcher's plate in the bottom of the first inning, she is injured and unable to pitch to the first batter. The result is:
- A. The team must play with only eight players.
  - B. The courtesy runner becomes B1's substitute retroactively and B1 has left the game.
  - C. B1 may move to a different defensive position.
  - D. B1 is ejected for unsporting conduct.
13. The softball field includes an elevated cement step in front of each dugout. B1 hits a foul fly caught by F3 such that F3's right foot is on the ground completely in live-ball territory and F3's left foot is on the elevated cement step with half the foot on the step and the other half over live-

- ball territory but completely off the ground. What is the result of the play?
- A. B1 is out on a good catch by F3; the ball is live and in play.
  - B. Foul ball; the ball is dead and B1 remains at bat.
  - C. B1 is out on a good catch by F3; the ball is dead.
  - D. Foul ball; the ball is live and in play and B1 remains at bat.
  - E. None of the above.
14. With no outs and R1 on second base, B2 is at bat with a 2-ball, 1-strike count. On the pitch, the ball contacts the jersey of B2 completely in the batter's box while R1 attempts to steal third base. The catcher throws to third base and R1 is tagged out. What is the correct ruling?
- A. Ball is live, R1 is out and batter has a 3-1 count.
  - B. Ball is dead, B2 is awarded first base, R1 is out at third base.
  - C. Ball is dead, B2 is awarded first base, R1 goes back to second base.
  - D. Live ball, only B2's jersey was contacted, not B2.
15. A batting helmet shall be worn by offensive personnel while:
- A. The ball is live and the player is in live-ball territory.
  - B. The on-deck batter is in the on-deck circle and the ball is live.
  - C. Base runners are on base, the ball is live and they are in live-ball territory.
  - D. All of the above.
16. All of the following are true regarding a legal softball field, EXCEPT:
- A. The field shall be free of obstructions between the foul lines.
  - B. The field shall contain an infield diamond.
  - C. The field shall contain an outfield area enclosed by a fence.
  - D. The bases are 60 feet apart when a 12-inch ball is used.
  - E. The pitching distance is 43 feet for female fast-pitch games.
17. Which statement about bats is correct?
- A. Bats should be free of rattles, dents, burrs, cracks and sharp edges.
  - B. Materials inside the bat or treatment/devices used to alter bat specifications and/or enhance performances are prohibited and render the bat illegal.
  - C. A nick or paint chip in the bat from metal cleats that does not extend into the laminations of the bat should not render a bat illegal.
  - D. All of the above.
18. If worn, headwear (caps, visors, headband, ribbons, etc.) must be which of the following:
- A. All the same color.
  - B. White, black, beige or school colors.

- C. The same color for all team members.
  - D. The same style for all team members.
19. With the ball in the circle in F1's possession, and there is no attempt by F1 to make a play on a base runner, when is the runner declared out based on the look-back rule?
- A. The batter-runner is safe at first base on a dropped third strike. She overruns first base and turns to the right. Seeing no fielder near second base, she runs toward second where she is safe.
  - B. The batter-runner gets a base hit and rounds first base and comes to a complete stop. She then returns to first base.
  - C. The batter-runner who gets an infield hit and overruns first base toward right field turns left, stops and then advances to second base.
  - D. The batter-runner gets a base hit and overruns first base toward right field, turns left and moves toward the infield in any direction except toward second base, then returns to first base.
20. Which of the following is true regarding knee and ankle braces that are unaltered from the manufacturer's original design/production?
- A. They do not require any additional padding/covering.
  - B. They must be covered with athletic tape.
  - C. They must be padded with 1/2-inch-thick foam.
  - D. They are permitted with a doctor's note.
  - E. All of the above.
21. F1 and F5 switch defensive positions after one out in the third inning. Later in the third inning, the same two players may switch positions again. This is legal.
- A. True
  - B. False
22. Legal bats must:
- A. Bear the 2000, 2004 or the USA Softball All Games Certification Mark.
  - B. Not be listed on the USA Softball's Non-Approved Bat List.
  - C. Bear the 2000, 2004 or the USA Softball All Games Certification Mark and not be listed on the USA Softball's Non-Approved Bat List.
  - D. None of the above.
23. Which of the following statements about bats qualifies as an altered bat?
- A. Bats should be free of rattles, dents, burrs, cracks and sharp edges.
  - B. Materials inside the bat or treatment/devices used to alter bat specifications and/or enhance performances are prohibited.
  - C. There is a minor nick or paint chip in the bat from metal cleats.
  - D. None of the above.

24. With R1 on second base, B2 is at bat with a 1 ball-1 strike count. The next pitch is wild and gets away from F2 as R1 attempts to steal third base. In an attempt to retrieve the ball, F2 throws the helmet and stops the ball, then throws R1 out at third base. What is the correct ruling?
- A. R1 is awarded third base and B2 is awarded first base.
  - B. R1 is awarded third base and B2 continues the at-bat with a 2-1 count.
  - C. R1 remains out and B2 continues the at-bat with a 2-1 count.
  - D. R1 is returned to second base and B2 continues the at-bat with a 2-1 count.
25. With R1 on third base, R2 on second base and one out, B4 hits a deep fly ball to F9 that is caught. R1 leaves the base before F9 first touches the ball, but R2 legally tags. Both R1 and R2 score as F9's throw is off target. Before the next pitch, the opposing team appeals that R1 left early. What is the correct ruling?
- A. R1 is declared out for the third out and R1's run is negated, but R2's run counts since R2 scored prior to the appeal.
  - B. Since F9's throw was off target, both R1 and R2 would have scored easily so both runs count.
  - C. R1 is declared out for the third out and R1's run is negated. R2's run counts since the only appeal that would negate a run is missing a base.
  - D. R1 is declared out for the third out of the inning. Since the third out was an appeal of the lead runner, neither run scores.
26. Regarding the taper of a softball bat, which statement is NOT in compliance with the current rules?
- A. The taper connects the narrower handle to the wider portion of the bat.
  - B. The taper of a bat is defined as having a solid surface.
  - C. The taper shall have a conical shape since it connects the narrower handle to the wider portion of the bat.
  - D. All are correct statements.
27. What factors should umpires consider in determining when to leave the field at the end of the game?
- A. Leave the field before all fielders have left fair territory and the catcher has vacated the normal fielding position.
  - B. Return to the field after they have left to make every attempt to get the call right.
  - C. When teams line up to shake hands following the completion of the game.
  - D. Umpires should remain on the field to watch for unsporting behavior by either team in the handshake line.
28. All of the following statements about sliding are true EXCEPT:
- A. If a runner slides, it may be feet first or headfirst.
  - B. In order to complete a legal slide, a runner must be able to touch the base with either the hand or foot.
  - C. In order for a runner to avoid unnecessary contact, the runner is required to slide if a fielder has possession of the ball and is waiting to make a tag.

- D. On an overslide, a runner may be tagged out if the runner does not remain in contact with the base.
29. A head coach who intends to utilize the DP/Flex option must alert the umpires and opposing team:
- A. Before that coach's team bats for the first time.
  - B. Before that coach's team throws its first pitch on defense.
  - C. During the exchange of lineup cards at home plate during the pregame conference.
  - D. Before the DP's first at-bat.
30. Team A's pitcher has a pink digital camouflage arm sleeve on the pitching arm extending from the uniform top all the way down to the wrist. The ruling should be:
- A. Legal, sleeves are not covered in NFHS softball rules.
  - B. Legal, as long as it does not contain any of the opposing team colors.
  - C. Illegal, the sleeve must be removed or covered. Sleeves must follow the same color restrictions as exposed undergarments. They must be a single solid color: black, white, gray or school color.
  - D. Illegal, sleeves are not allowed to be worn.
31. Which of the following would result in a coach being in violation of bench and field conduct rules?
- A. Entering behind the catcher while the opposing pitcher and catcher are in their positions.
  - B. Being outside the dugout while their team is on defense.
  - C. Having objects other than scorekeeping and stopwatch devices in the coach's box.
  - D. All of the above.
32. A small hole naturally occurred in front of the pitching plate during the course of the game. On the pitch, the pitcher pushes off the plate with the pivot foot and loses contact with the ground as the foot is dragged across the hole. The pivot foot, however, is no higher than the level plane of the ground around the hole as the pitch is delivered. What is the correct call?
- A. No call. The pitch is legal because in the umpire's judgment, the foot would have been in contact with the ground had the hole not been present.
  - B. No pitch, and the game is delayed until the hole can be repaired.
  - C. Illegal pitch because the pivot foot is not touching the ground in the bottom of the hole.
  - D. No pitch and the pitcher receives a warning. If the pivot foot fails to touch the ground in the bottom of the hole on future pitches, an illegal pitch will be called.
33. The pitcher deliberately rolls the ball to home plate to keep the batter from striking it. The umpire should:
- A. Call no pitch and direct the pitcher to throw a legal pitch.
  - B. Award a ball to the batter, and advance all runners one base.
  - C. Call a delayed dead ball for an illegal pitch.

- D. Ask if the pitcher would like to declare an intentional walk.
34. All of the following are true regarding the ball rotation, EXCEPT:
- A. A pitcher has a choice of balls at the start of each half-inning if both balls have been in play.
  - B. The unused ball must be put into play in the bottom of the first inning if it is not used in the top of the first inning.
  - C. The ball in play should be returned to the 16-foot circle after every half-inning.
  - D. The pitcher may possess both balls and choose the one desired to start that half-inning.
  - E. None of the above.
35. The plate umpire notices that B1 steps into the batter's box with an altered bat.
- A. The umpire shall wait for an appeal from the defensive team.
  - B. The umpire shall penalize a strike on the batter.
  - C. The umpire shall declare B1 out and remove the bat. B1 and the head coach are both ejected.
  - D. There is no penalty until B1 hits the ball.
36. In which of the following situations is the batter out?
- A. The batter attempts to confuse the pitcher by stepping out of the box on one side of home plate to the box on the other side while the pitcher is in position ready to pitch.
  - B. A bunt on the third strike is foul.
  - C. The batter throws the bat and interferes with a defensive player attempting a play.
  - D. All of the above.
37. R1 is on first base. B2 hits a pitch to F6 with one foot touching the ground completely outside the batter's box. F4 obstructs R1 advancing to second base. The correct ruling is:
- A. Delayed dead ball. B2 is out but R1 is awarded second base for F4 obstructing.
  - B. Dead ball. B2 is out and R1 must return to first base.
  - C. Delayed dead ball. B2 is out and R1 advances at their own risk.
  - D. Dead ball. B2 is out. R1 is awarded second base if F4's obstruction occurred before B2 contacted the ball.
38. When a legal substitute replaces a courtesy runner, the player for whom the courtesy runner was running for has left the game.
- A. True
  - B. False
39. Which statement is NOT an example of interference?
- A. Batter-runner running outside the 3-foot lane interferes with the fielder taking the throw at first base.

- B. The batter-runner makes contact with a fair batted ball before reaching first base.
  - C. The batter-runner stops between home plate and first base to delay being tagged out.
  - D. The batter-runner remains in the batter's box on a play at home plate in order to prevent an obvious out.
40. B1 bunts a ball that bounces off the plate and rolls in front of the plate. As B1 runs toward first base with one foot partially touching the foul line and the other foot completely in the running lane. F2 fields the ball and the throw to first base contacts B1. The correct call is:
- A. F2 is ejected for unsporting behavior.
  - B. B1 is out for interference.
  - C. B1 can choose to use either the white or orange base.
  - D. This is a legal play. B1 is considered to be in the running lane and is safe at first base if B1 reaches the base before being put out.
41. R1 is on third base and the infielders are playing in for a potential play at the plate. B2 hits a ball sharply down the third-base line that passes F6 before striking R1, while R1 is standing on third base. The correct call is:
- A. An immediate dead ball for hitting R1. Award B2 first base and leave R1 on third base.
  - B. An immediate dead ball for hitting R1. Award B2 first base and call R1 out.
  - C. An immediate dead ball for hitting R1. Call both R1 and B2 out.
  - D. Signal fair ball and allow play to continue.
42. R1 is at third base. B2 hits a ground ball to F6 who throws to first base, which is a double first base. B2 touches the white portion and collides with F3 who is standing on the white portion about to receive the ball. The correct ruling is:
- A. B2 is out but R1 can advance on the play.
  - B. B2 may run to the white base and is safe if B2 beats the ball.
  - C. Since B2 was running to the white base, F3 must use the colored base.
  - D. The ball is dead, B2 is out, and R1 must return to the last base touched at the time of interference.
43. There are four criteria that an umpire uses to judge whether a batter attempted to hit or bunt the pitched ball. Which statement is NOT correct?
- A. Rolling the wrist and swinging through the pitched ball is considered an attempt.
  - B. If the bat is drawn back before the pitch gets to the bat, it is not an attempt.
  - C. Holding a bat in the strike zone is not a strike nor an attempt to swing.
  - D. The batter makes an attempt to hit the pitch.
44. The ball becomes dead immediately when a batted ball touches any base runner.
- A. True

B. False

45. B1 bunts the ball in front of home plate. As B1 is running to first base, B1 is hit with the throw from F2. Which of the following is used in determining if the runner is out for interference?
- A. If either foot last contacted the ground completely outside of the 3-foot lane.
  - B. If the batter-runner's left foot is outside the 3-foot lane but is in the air at the moment the batter-runner is hit with the throw.
  - C. If the batter-runner was hit in fair territory.
  - D. If the batter-runner has both feet on the ground when hit with the throw.
46. Which of the following is NOT true about gloves/mitts?
- A. Gloves/mitts shall not be the color of the ball including lacing and seams.
  - B. Gloves/mitts shall be a maximum of two colors.
  - C. Gloves/mitts shall be permitted to have one American flag not to exceed 2 inches by 3 inches.
  - D. Gloves/mitts shall not be judged as distracting by the umpire.
47. A fair ball is a batted ball that, while over fair territory, an offensive player interferes with a defensive player attempting to field a batted ball.
- A. True.
  - B. False.
48. R1 steals second and slides into second safely. R1's helmet falls off and the umpire notices the runner is wearing earrings. What is the correct ruling?
- A. The runner is out for wearing jewelry.
  - B. The runner is safe and the team is issued a warning.
  - C. There is no penalty for wearing jewelry.
  - D. The umpire sends the runner back to first.
49. B1 hits a fly ball in foul territory near the first-base line and the batter-runner collides with F3 while attempting to field the fly ball in foul territory. What is the correct ruling?
- A. The umpire shall signal a delayed dead ball.
  - B. The ball is dead, B1 is out and since this is a foul ball, runner(s) must return to the base occupied at the time of the pitch.
  - C. It is the fielder's responsibility to avoid the batter-runner if B1 is in the running lane and there is no penalty.
  - D. The batter-runner is ejected because any collision is considered malicious contact.
50. The umpire notices that B3 is wearing a smartwatch. When the coach calls out the signal to the batter, B3 looks at the smartwatch and then steps into the batter's box. What is the correct ruling?



- A. There is no penalty for communicating with a smartwatch.
- B. The smartwatch is considered jewelry and the team is issued a warning.
- C. B3 is out and restricted to the dugout for wearing a smartwatch.
- D. B3 is using an electronic device to communicate with the coach outside of the dugout. B3 is ejected unless the umpire deems it to be of a minor nature.

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**Completed outline must be signed by all present and sent to the regional director by all present and sent to the regional director by May 15, 2023**

**MOA SOFTBALL STUDY CLUBS**  
**2023**  
**LESSON #3**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

CLUB \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

1. **Umpires Uniforms Requirements**

- **Reminder** - Softball officials may wear a jacket. The required jacket shall be a standard navy-blue pullover with powder blue and with trim (NFHS) or a navy-blue pullover with powder blue trim (ASA) to be worn for varsity contests. Both jackets are to be unadorned.
- **Softball umpires' hats must be unadorned.**
- Navy blue shirts are allowed. All members of a game crew must wear the same color shirts.
- Navy blue slacks had been added as a uniform option. Montana will allow for the use of either navy blue or heather gray slacks but all umpires on the crew must wear the same color.
- Review Umpires Uniform in the 2022-2023 Umpires Manual on page 16

2. **MECHANICS AND MORE MECHANICS** - Please review the following information on mechanics and information that has been included in previous study clubs over the years regarding umpiring mechanics:

- Take time to access the information on the MOA Website regarding softball mechanics training
- **Please review and discuss your pregame meeting** and what will be discussed and what is required (team equipment legal and uniforms properly worn) – remember head coaches must attend this meeting and the game cannot continue until the head coach is present.
- Review and discuss your procedures for communicating ground rules to each team at the pregame conference. Discuss with pool members the ground rules associated with each field your group works at during the season. **Please review Rule 4-1-3 – Ground Rules in the 2023 NFHS Softball Rules Book on pages 41**
- **Please review the Official Softball Signals on page 66 and the Signals and Descriptions on page 66 of the 2022-2023 NFHS Umpires Manual. All umpires need to use these signals and only these signals.**
- **Please review the information on Unnecessary Signals contained in the Addendum after Study Club # 4.**

**And:** Please always take time to review and discuss all areas in the **Umpires Manual** — dealing with proper mechanics – proper mechanics are critical and yearly review is necessary for rookie umpires but also very valuable for veteran umpires. The manual breaks down specific areas including responsibilities of the plate umpire and the field umpire and contains detailed explanations of different umpire systems.

- Also, please review once again the plate mechanics information (this information is provided the addendum to these study clubs after Study Club # 4).
3. The MHSA office continues to receive concerns from umpires and teams regarding difficult weather conditions. Rain and impending darkness are two major culprits. High winds, lightning and thunder can be troublesome. Please review as a pool your procedures for determining when a game should be suspended or called for any condition. **Especially review the rules adopted three years ago that are listed below where regular season games suspended before 4 1/2 or 5 innings will be resumed from the point of interruption and do not start over:**
- b. Games suspended before 4-1/2 or 5 innings because of weather (resume from the point of interruption).
  - c. Games suspended before 4-1/2 innings that are tied (resume from the point of interruption).
  - d. Games suspended before 4-1/2 or 5 innings because of darkness (resume from the point of interruption).

Please review the **Guidelines on Handling Contests During Lightning Disturbances** – on page 95 – Appendix E in the 2023 NFHS Softball Rules Book.

(Montana state adoptions regarding ending a game are listed in Study Club # 4).

#### **NEW**

The following is the pay information for umpires regarding cancelled/postponed/rescheduled contests:

E. If an official was not notified but was present to work a contest that was cancelled or postponed for reasons related to an act of God including, but not limited to, power failure, adverse weather, or hazardous road conditions, the officials must be paid at least half of the game fee plus all travel and per diem allowances. Contest(s) cancelled due to weather or act of God will be rescheduled using the same officials (if possible) and those officials will receive only travel and per diem allowances for the cancelled contest(s).

If different officials are used, officials will be paid all travel/per diem allowance and game fee. In regard to cancellations/postponements after the contest begins, officials that work one quarter (or its equivalent, **i.e. two full innings in softball**) or more will receive a full game fee and if the officials work less than one quarter, they will receive one half a game fee (lightning cancellations, power outages etc.).

F. If an official was not notified by a school that a contest date was changed or cancelled, but the official was present to work the contest as originally scheduled, the official must be paid a full game fee plus all travel and per diem allowances. This also applies when a team does not show up for the contest.

4. Communicable Disease and Skin Infection Procedures – with the emergence of MRSA and other blood borne infectious diseases please review the NFHS policy listed on page 94, Appendix D in the **2023 NFHS Softball Rules Book**.
5. **Discuss as a group the most important rules that continue to surface throughout the season. Do they include the following? (add yours to the list also):**
- DP/Flex
  - Uniforms – Exposed Undergarments
  - **Jewelry Rule : see attached MHSA Jewlery Rule in Rules and Regulations**
  - Interference / Obstruction

- **Pitching – Illegal Pitcher**
- **Appeal Plays**
- **Look Back Rule**
- **Dead Ball – Delayed Dead Ball**

**Completed outline must be signed by all present and sent to the regional director.  
by May 15, 2023.**

**MOA SOFTBALL STUDY CLUBS**  
**2023**  
**LESSON #4**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

CLUB \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

1. The National Federation allows states to alter certain rules – Review the following alterations that the MHSA Executive Board has approved for adoption by our state:
  1. Double first bases are mandatory – rules for utilizing the double first base have been moved back into the body of the rules. Please review rule 8-10 on page 75 of the Rules Book.
  2. (4-2-1) Game ending procedures: page 42 of the Rules Book
    - a) Employ a minimum 1 ½ hour time limit to end games at **invitational tournament**. Using a maximum time limit of 1 ½ hours can end games played at invitational tournaments. The game can be called if there is five minutes or less before the maximum time limit **or officials should not start a new inning after one hour and twenty minutes of play, except if a tie exists where NFHS Softball Rules for tiebreaking would be followed.**
    - b) Varsity and Sub-varsity games may end after three (3) innings if a team is leading by (15) runs. (With mutual agreement of coaches)
  3. (4-2-6) Tie Breaker – **Invitational tournaments** which use a tie breaking procedure shall follow the NFHS rules – beginning in the top of the eighth or at the time limit the last batter from the previous inning will be placed on second base at the beginning of each half inning with the game then proceeding in a normal manner until a winner is decided.
2. Review how your group will recommend (rank) umpires to the MHSA office for the state tournaments. (Class AA – Helena, Class A – Belgrade, Class B-C – Anaconda). Review the selection process for state tournament hiring, which is found on pages 131-132 – Letter H of the MOA Handbook.
3. Are there any specific problems in your area schools which should be addressed i.e. field concerns – especially safe playing surfaces and proper field markings, checks given late, security, game times, poor sportsmanship, etc.
4. What issues does your group believe are important universal issues that need to be addressed by all officials' pools throughout the state? (Including rule or mechanics changes, MOA policy changes, etc.) Please submit to the MHSA/MOA office any issues or any particular areas of concern that you would like included in clinics or study clubs.
- V. Discuss your methods of evaluating fellow MOA members. Are the methods working properly and positively? Should you start a method if you are not evaluating at the present time? Do these methods work for "upgrading"?
5. How many prospective officials did you have in your pool this year? Discuss and evaluate your methods of recruitment and retention. There have been two different posters sent to each official as a part of our "Respect Officials Campaign".

6. You have an obligation to read your MOA Handbook. All officials should be aware of the governing body's rules and regulations. Any changes you would like to see should be directed to your regional director for their Board meeting in June.

7. In evaluating your own (and possibly your pool's collectively) performance this season and in preparation for umpiring high school softball next year review the following from your season:

- Judgment
- Mechanics and Technique
- Knowledge of the Rules
- Physical Conditioning
- Making Decisions Positively and Promptly
- Umpire Crew Cohesiveness
- Proper Mechanics
- Keeping the Game Moving
- Keeping a Dignified Attitude
- Making Decisions Based on Fact
- Rule Knowledge

**Completed outline must be signed by all present and sent to the regional director by  
May 15, 2023**

**MOA SOFTBALL STUDY CLUBS**  
**2023**  
**ADDENDUM WITH ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**CONCUSSION INFORMATION**



**MHSA/MOA Concussion  
and Injury Procedure**



Officials, coaches and administrators are being asked to make all efforts to ensure the safety of athletes who participate in MHSA activities. Regarding players experiencing possible concussions or other serious injuries during MHSA contests or practices, the following procedures will be immediately implemented:

**Officials' Responsibilities:**

- Officials are asked to use their best judgment in observing the signs, symptoms and behaviors of a concussion and other possible serious injuries. If there is a player that exhibits signs and symptoms of an injury (listed below from the NFHS Rule Book), officials will make coaches aware of the injured player and call an injury time out.
- The official should notify the coach by making the following statement:
  - *"Coach, you need to take a look at this player; he/she is exhibiting signs and symptoms of an injury."*
  - Emphasize the notification statement to coaches – "Coach, you need to take a look this player he/she is exhibiting signs and symptoms of an **injury**."
- Once the official notifies the coach, it is now the coach's responsibility.
- The official does not need written permission for an athlete to return to play nor does the official need to verify the credentials of the licensed health-care professional.
- Ultimately, the decision to return an athlete to competition rests with the coach, after the affected player is evaluated by a licensed health-care professional.

**Remember, when in doubt, sit them out!**

**Coaches' Responsibilities:**

- After the official has notified the coach of the injury and has sent the athlete off of the field/court, or if a coach witnesses an incident in practice, the coach must then make the initial determination of the injury. For instance, if the coach knows that a player is diabetic, and may be experiencing a diabetic episode, the coach should have the student treated appropriately and then return the player to play or practice.
- If the coach suspects the athlete is exhibiting signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion (listed below from the NFHS Rule Book), then the coach must have the player evaluated by a licensed health-care professional.
- If an appropriate health-care professional on the sideline determines that the athlete HAS NOT suffered a concussion, the athlete may return to play.
- If an appropriate health-care professional is not available to evaluate the athlete, the athlete SHOULD NOT be allowed by the coach to return to play.
- In game situations, the official does not need written permission for an athlete to return to play nor does the official need to verify the credentials of the licensed health-care professional.

- Ultimately, the decision to return an athlete to competition or practice rests with the coach, after the affected player is evaluated by a licensed health care professional.

**Remember, when in doubt, sit them out!**

#### **Suggested Guidelines for Management of Concussion (NFHS Rule Book)**

A concussion is a traumatic brain injury that interferes with normal brain function. An athlete does not have to lose consciousness (be “knocked out”) to have suffered a concussion.

**Discuss “Signs, Symptoms and Behaviors” consistent with identifying an injured athlete.**

- **Common Symptoms of Concussion Include:**
- Headache, Fogginess, Difficulty concentrating, easily confused, slowed thought processes, Difficulty with memory, Nausea, Lack of energy, tiredness, Dizziness, poor balance, Blurred vision, Sensitive to light and sounds, Mood changes- irritable, anxious, or tearful

Suggested Concussion Management:

1. No athlete should return to play (RTP) or practice on the same day of a concussion.
2. Any athlete suspected of having a concussion should be evaluated by an appropriate health-care professional that day.
3. Any athlete with a concussion should be medically cleared by an appropriate healthcare professional prior to resuming participation in any practice or competition.
4. After medical clearance, RTP should follow a stepwise protocol with provisions for delayed RTP based upon return of any signs or symptoms.

For further details please see the “NFHS Suggested Guidelines for Management of Concussion” at [www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org).

#### **Administrators’ Responsibilities:**

- Administrators must require all coaches to review and implement this procedure.
- Administrators should have regular reviews with their coaching staffs concerning these procedures.
- Administrators should require coaches to report all incidents to the administration immediately following the practice or contest. All incidents should be documented.
- Administrators must understand the responsibilities that coaches have in the decision to return athletes to play. MHSA Rules and Regulations item (4) states: *A participant in any MHSA sanctioned sport who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion or balance problems) or other serious injury shall be immediately removed from the game, evaluated by the coaching staff in regard to the nature of the injury, and if it is determined to be a possible concussion or other serious injury, the player shall not return to play until cleared by an licensed health-care professional.*
- Ultimately, the decision to return an athlete to competition rests with the coach, after the affected player is evaluated by a licensed health care professional.

**Remember, when in doubt, sit them out!**

#### **Concussion Resource Information**

Various information and resources are available on the MHSA website. Visit [www.mhsa.org](http://www.mhsa.org) and proceed to the Sports Medicine page from the link on the home page.



## **DP/FLEX RULE INFORMATION**

**DP/FLEX Rule - Designated Player (DP) / FLEX Rule** – with this rule taking effect eight years ago there still is some confusion with the rule that led to misapplication of the rule. It is imperative that all umpires have an understanding of this rule to answer questions and enforce the rule properly. **Please Review the DP/FLEX Rule on pages 30-31 of the 2023 Rules Book (3-3-6) and please Review all the Case Book Plays dealing with the Designated Player (DP)/FLEX rule.**

Please take time to review the information on the MHSA website in regard to the DP/FLEX rule. There are actual examples illustrated by the use of a line up card including the new examples used this year in the online clinic. The site is [www.mhsa.org](http://www.mhsa.org), then click on softball on the left and then on DP/FLEX Rule at the bottom of the softball page under links and clinics. Also, information is available on the National Federation website nfhs.org under the softball tab.

## **Pitching Information**

**Pitching** continues to be a NFHS Point of Emphasis and has been a point of emphasis for the MHSA/MOA for many years – Please review and discuss this information that has been sent to each coach and included in the study clubs for the past few years:

The Leap, The Crow Hop and The Creep (this information was provided in the last seven study clubs but is well worth reviewing again especially as pitching continues to be a national point of emphasis).

The leap is an illegal act that results in the pitcher becoming airborne on the initial push-off from the pitcher's plate. When using the leap, the pitcher pushes up and away from the rubber, and both feet are simultaneously off the ground during the delivery. The rules mandate that the pitcher's pivot foot must remain in contact with the rubber or must drag on the ground away from the rubber on the delivery motion. It's legal if the pivot foot turns or slides as the pitcher pushes off the rubber, providing there is no loss of contact with the rubber. The pitcher may also legally slide the pivot foot across the pitcher's plate. If contact with the rubber is maintained, that sliding is not considered a step and is allowed.

The crow hop is, and for many years has been, a blatant violation in fast pitch. With the crow hop, the pitcher steps, jumps, hops or slides the pivot foot off the front of the rubber while maintaining body weight on the pivot foot. The pitcher then replants the pivot foot in front of the rubber. That replant establishes a new impetus for the pitch in front of the rubber. The pitcher then pushes off illegally from in front of the rubber when delivering the pitch. A pitcher who raises the pivot foot off the rubber and then returns the foot to the rubber did not crow hop but is illegally pitching.

Many pitchers pitch with the stride foot in front of the body but kick up some dirt as the pivot foot stabs the ground or turns as the ball is released. That stabbing action is usually an ending segment of a legal delivery or recovery step, not a crow hop. **The key is whether the body weight is moving forward (legal) or on the pivot foot (illegal) when the pivot foot stabs the ground.** A real crow hop affords a tremendous advantage for the pitcher.

The "CREEP" – With leaping outlawed, many pitchers concentrate intently on keeping their pivot foot on the ground to comply with the "drag" rule, so they aren't called for leaping. However, that

attentiveness to keeping the pivot foot on the ground resurrected an old-time style of pitching called the “creep”. With the creep, the pitcher slides the pivot foot off the front of the rubber to comply with the drag rule but keeps the body weight on the rear foot. By creeping forward off the rubber with the pivot foot and keeping the body weight back, the pitcher can push off anew with a forward motion not related to the original pitching motion. This method is difficult for umpires to recognize. That pitch is also known as the “crow drag” or the “slide.” The creep can result from a pitcher’s honest attempt to keep the pivot foot on the ground, or it can be an intentional act to disguise that form of the crow hop. Either way, the pitch is illegal.

## **Plate Mechanics Information**

Please review the following information from Referee Magazine - “Working the Plate”

**Mechanics – Please discuss the following information on “plate work” for fast-pitch softball. Give demonstrations of these techniques for review and for new officials.**

### **a) Choosing a stance**

All plate umpires must master the box stance. After perfecting the box, some umpires elect to use the scissors or one-knee method of umpiring.

**Box stance** – (right-handed batter) – With the box, your feet are wider than shoulder width apart. Place your right foot flat on the ground six inches to one foot behind the catcher’s midpoint. The foot is pointed toward the second baseman’s normal position. The toe of the left foot is flat on the ground and pointed toward the pitcher. The lead foot is lined up with the heel of the catcher’s left foot. The toe of your right foot is lined up with heel of your lead foot. Flare your knees out so your knees are closely aligned with your ankles. Bend at the knees, not at the waist, and keep your buttocks above your knees. Your body weight will be about 80 percent forward. Keep your shoulders square to the pitcher. Position your elbows inside your upper body frame with your hands in loose, relaxed fists in front of your crotch. Avoid folding your arms behind your back.

**The scissors** – your legs are fully open like a pair of scissors. Position your feet one full stride apart. Your front foot, nearest the batter, is flat on the ground between the batter and the catcher and about six inches behind the catcher’s left foot. Your lead foot is bent at a 90-degree angle at the knee to support most of your body weight. Your rear foot is fully extended with knee straight. The ball of your rear foot is on the ground with your heel elevated. Your head is well forward, between the batter and the catcher.

**The one-knee** – this stance is similar to the scissors. However, your rear knee is resting completely on the ground, your feet about one-half stride apart and your back straight. For smaller batters, it may be necessary to lean forward to keep your eyes at the top of the strike zone.

**Setting up** – Work in the slot between the batter and the catcher. Your head position is critical. Your head must be at least one full head above the catcher’s head, at least one full head to the side of the catcher’s head and at least one full head behind the catcher’s head. Your eyes must be level and your head outside the perimeter of the strike zone as you look down and through the zone. Line up your right ear with the black border of the inside corner.

**Staying down** – Avoid tunnel vision with your eyes fixed ahead. Track the pitch with your eyes. Follow the pitch all the way to the batter’s bat or the catcher’s glove. On a ball not batted, stay down until after the catcher receives the ball. Train yourself not to bail out, duck or flinch behind the plate.

## **Infield Fly Information**

### Two Unwavering Philosophies – absolute guidelines

- 1) Is an infield-area pop up a batted ball that could enable the fielders to execute an underserved double play if the ball isn't caught?
- 2) Is a fielder in the infield area settled comfortably underneath the ball? Note: An infield-area pop up can sometimes include part of the outfield if the two guidelines are met. That depends, of course, upon the level of play of the participants.

Don't call an infield fly until both of those requirements are met. An infield fly should not be declared before a fly ball reaches its apex, but it may be called seconds later when an umpire judges the ball is an infield fly.

Questions to ask:

- 1) Who are infielders regarding infield fly situations? All infielders, including the pitcher and catcher and any outfielder stationed in the infield at the time of the pitch or an outfielder who enters the infield area playing a batted ball are considered infielders for the purpose of this rule.
- 2) What are the infield fly signals? Crew members must place their open palmed hand across the opposite chest in an umpire-to-umpire confirmation signal. Other signals can include the touching of the bill of the hat with index finger extended, double tap of the hand on top of the cap and showing a thumbs up-closed fist signal or using both thumbs up signal. You need to talk before agreeing on the signal. When an infield fly is judged the umpire will extend his or her arm overhead with the index finger pointing upward. After verbally declaring the infield fly, the umpire will clench the extended hand into a fist.  
When the infield fly is no longer in effect, an umpire-to-umpire signal is used with a wiping motion on the forearm from the elbow to the wrist.
- 3) Who calls an infield fly? Shared coverage mechanics – either umpire can initially declare an infield fly except a fly ball hit near a foul line – that should be the plate umpire making the call.
- 4) Ask yourself – can this ball be caught by a fielder with ordinary effort? However, avoid thinking – “should this ball be caught by a fielder with ordinary effort?”
- 5) Runner's rights – runners have the right to run at their peril on a declared infield fly or they may tag and attempt to advance on any caught infield fly.
- 6) What happens when infield fly drops? The calling umpire should dramatically and assertively confirm the call by loudly calling, “That's an infield fly! The batter is out! Bunts or line drives cannot be an infield fly.
- 7) Umpires erroneously fail to call the infield fly - the infield fly should be retroactively declared after the fact.
- 8) Intentionally dropped infield fly – the rule takes precedent – the batter is out and ball is live and in play.

Did You Know? – History of the Infield Fly – the rule was instituted in 1895 to prevent the defensive team from employing shenanigans and unsporting schemes to gain an undeserved double play on routine pop flies in the infield. The rule was only in effect when there was one out but was revised in 1901 to also be in effect with no outs.

<b>MECHANICS INFORMATION UNNECESSARY SIGNALS</b>
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- **Unnecessary Signals** – Referee Magazine ran an article “Give Unnecessary Signals the Heave Ho.” Please review the following information from that article -

- 1) Never use hand motions to indicate that a pitch is high, low, inside or outside. If the pitch is a strike, call a strike and use a strong hammer signal – hand and arm out to the side of the body to a 90-degree angle with a closed fist – be strong and crisp (don’t use baseball mechanics turning an pointing to one side with one finger). If it is a ball, call a ball and prepare for the next pitch.
- 2) Never pound your fists together to indicate a full count.
- 3) Never say, “Ball four take your base.” And don’t point to first base.
- 4) Never say, “Strike three, you’re out.”
- 5) When the batter swings and misses for a third strike, give a non-verbal, strike signal for strike three.
- 6) No verbal call is necessary on obvious foul balls back to the screen or over the fence.
- 7) Mechanics Quick Tip – Umpires communicate through the use of signals. The less a signal is seen, the more effective it is when used. If there is no play, a call or signal is not needed. **Do not draw attention to yourself by overusing, misusing or needlessly using any signal.** Except for the infield fly, there is no need to echo a partner’s signal.

Signals are designed to emphasize an umpire’s ruling on a play as well as communicate with his or her partner, coaches, players, scorekeepers and spectators.

Poorly executed and unauthorized signals serve only to confuse.

I am very excited to be the new Softball liaison for the MHSA and look forward to working with everyone!

Have a great season!

Amy Bartels