



May 13, 2024

NFHS Softball Weekly Rule Interpretations

Situation 1: With R1 on third base, R2 on first base and one out, B4 hits a ground ball to F6 who throws to F4 at second base retiring R2 for the second out of the inning. F4 then throws home to make a play on R1 advancing, the throw is late and R1 is ruled safe. B4, thinking there are three outs retreats toward home and picks up their bat, as everyone starts yelling for B4 to get back to first the defense throws the ball to F3 who contacts first base with the ball. The umpire rules B4 out and since this is the third out of the inning on the batter-runner prior to reaching first base rules that R1's run does not score. **RULING:** Correct ruling. As rule 2-23-4 states if a runner after touching the next base, except home, retreats for any reason toward the base first occupied the force play is reinstated and the runner may again be put out if the defense tags the base to which the runner is forced. Although the batter-runner is technically not forced at first base, this same situation does apply to the batter-runner in the fact that if they retreat toward home after touching first base they have reinstated the risk of being legally put out prior to reaching first base. In this case, the batter-runner is put out prior to touching first base for the third out of the inning. Rule 9-1-1 Exception a states that a run is not scored if the runner advances to home plate during action in which the third out is made by the batter-runner before touching first base. Again, when the batter-runner retreated toward home they not only reinstated the defenses opportunity to retire them prior to reaching first base they also reinstated rule 9-1-1 Exception a that negates any runs scored on that play if the batter-runner is retired prior to touching first base. (2-23-4, 8-2-2, 9-1-1 Exception a)

Situation 2: Team A's pitcher steps on the pitching plate with the ball in their pitching hand pushing the ball against the front of their hip and their glove in front of their pitching hand. Team B's coach objects stating that their batter cannot clearly see the ball and this is a requirement prior to bringing the hands together to start the pitch. The umpire rules that this is legal as the umpire is able to clearly see that the hands were separated when the pitcher stepped on the pitching plate and remained separated until after the pitcher took or simulated taking a signal from the catcher. **RULING:** Correct ruling. There is no rule that requires "presenting the ball" to the batter or that the pitcher must make the ball visible to the batter prior to starting their pitch. The only requirement is that the pitcher have their hands separated when stepping on the pitching plate and the hands remain separated until after they take or simulate taking a signal from the catcher. If the umpire is able to determine that the pitchers hands are separated and remain separated until after the pitcher has satisfied the requirement of taking or simulating the signal from the catcher there is no violation. (6-1-1 a, b &c)

Situation 3: Team A's pitcher steps on the pitching plate with the ball in their glove and their hands separated and simulates taking a signal from the catcher. As the coach from the dugout calls out "4-3-1" F1 brings their hands together and looks at the playbook/playcard on their non-pitching arm then starts their pitch. Team B's coach objects stating that the pitcher cannot take the signal with their hands together. The umpire rules that this is legal as they simulated taking a signal from the catcher prior to bringing their hands together and did not violate the time allowed to have their hands together prior to starting their pitch. **RULING:** Correct ruling. There is no requirement that specifies when or where the

pitcher can take the signal for the pitch. The pitcher may take the signal prior to stepping onto the pitcher's plate, while on the pitcher's plate with hands separated or while on the pitcher's plate with the hands together. NFHS Softball rules require that the pitcher perform the following actions in this order:

- 1) The pitcher step onto the pitching plate with the hands separated (6-1-1a)
- 2) While in contact with the pitcher's plate and hands still separated they take or simulate taking a signal from the catcher (6-1-1b)
- 3) Bring their hands together in front of the body for not less than one second and not more than 10 seconds before releasing the ball. The hands may be motionless or moving (6-1-1c)

As long as the pitcher complies with these rules, they have not violated the pitching rule by taking a signal with their hands together while on the pitcher's plate.