



May 28, 2024

## NFHS Softball Weekly Rule Interpretations

**Situation 1:** In the third inning, Team A is at bat with R1 on second base and B2 up to bat with no outs. B2 hits a ball to the second base side of F6 who stops and then alters their path to the ball to avoid contact with R1 who is heading to third base on the hit. F6 then fields the ball and throws B2 out at first base. Team B's coach asks the umpires why that was not interference on R1 as F6 was clearly hindered or impeded by having to move around R1. The umpire states that since F6 was able to continue and get B2 out there was no interference. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. Interference is an immediate dead ball when it occurs. When there is an interaction with a runner and a fielder making an initial play on the batted ball the umpire must judge if the fielder was hindered, impeded or confused by the runner at that point. If the umpire judges the runner was guilty of interference then the ball is dead at that point so no further action is considered for the ruling on that play. Allowing the play to continue and using the results of the play to determine interference is not the correct procedure for NFHS Softball. The determination for interference is made based off the interaction between the fielder and the runner and is either a dead ball at that point and the runner is out or there was no interference and the play is allowed to continue, as there was no violation. (2-31, 8-6-10)

**Situation 2:** With R1 on second base and no outs, B2 hits a hard ground ball that bounces off F5 and deflects toward F6. As F6 is going for the ball, it contacts R1 who is attempting to avoid the ball. The umpire rules that since the ball is still within a step and a reach of the initial point of contact with F5 that F6 is still making the initial play on the ball and rules R1 out. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. Since the ball is deflected by F5, F6 is not considered to be making the initial play on the batted ball. Since the ball was deflected by F5, R1 would have to intentionally make contact with the deflected ball to be guilty of interfering with F6. (2-46-3, 8-6-10a, 8-6-12, 8-8-6)

**Situation 3:** With no outs and R1 on second base, B2 hits a ground ball to F6. F6 fields the ball and makes an errant throw toward F3 that sails past first base. R1 seeing the over throw touches third base and continues toward home. B2 is tripped by F3 as they are rounding first base and ends up on the ground between first and second base. F9 who was backing up the throw retrieves the ball throwing it to F4 who tags B2, still trying to get untangled from F3, out with R1 one step from home when the out is made. The umpire rules a dead ball since the obstructed runner was put out and awards B2 first base since they were not half way to second with the obstruction had occurred. They also return R1 to third base since they had not touched home prior to the obstructed runner being put out. **Ruling:** Incorrect ruling. The umpire was correct to call a dead ball when the obstructed runner was put out between the two bases where they were obstructed. However, the basis for their award not correct. The umpire should award the obstructed runner the base they would have reached in the umpires judgement had there been no obstruction. In this case, it most likely would have been first or second base depending on umpire judgement but should not be based on how far the runner had advanced prior to the obstruction. Awards for obstruction are intended to remove the amount the runner was impeded by the defense, if they were just slightly impeded and they would not have advanced farther than first base then the umpire should award them first base. If the runner was speedy and the act of being tripped and

ending up delayed for a much longer time the umpire could easily judge that the runner would have obtained second base had the obstruction not occurred. Again, the umpire should make a judgement of the base the runner would have reached had there not been obstruction when that obstruction occurs and “protect” that runner until they reach that base, or if they do not reach that base award them that base when playing action has ended. In addition, the umpire should award each other runner affected by the obstruction the base or bases they would have achieved had there been no obstruction. In this case, R1 who was one-step from home plate would have reached home plate had the umpire not had to call a dead ball to enforce the obstruction penalty. So it is safe to judge that R1 would have obtained home plate had there been no obstruction and they should be awarded home on this play. (8-4-3b, Penalties 1 and 3)