



NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

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Balk rule revised for high school baseball

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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INDIANAPOLIS, IN (June 22, 2004) — At its annual meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana, on June 18-19, the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Baseball Rules Committee defined what is a balk and what is not for a high school baseball pitcher.

Rule 6-1-1 was revised to specify when a baseball pitcher can turn his shoulders toward base runners while on the mound. It is now legal for a pitcher to turn his shoulders to check a runner if he is in the set position and in contact with the pitcher's plate. However, if the pitcher turns his shoulders in the windup position to check a runner, it is a balk. Turning the shoulders after bringing the hands together during or after the stretch is also a balk.

"The use of the shoulder turn while in the set position does not afford the pitcher an advantage," said B. Elliot Hopkins, NFHS assistant director and liaison to the NFHS Baseball Rules Committee. "The prohibition of such actually creates a disadvantage."

In other changes, Rule 1-4-6 states that players now have the option of wearing batting helmets equipped with attached facemasks or guards. Regardless of whether the mask is produced with the helmet or attached after the helmet is manufactured, all attached facemasks or guards must meet NOCSAE standards at the time of the mask's attachment.

"NOCSAE recently developed a standard for facemasks and guards, and the committee felt it would be prudent to incorporate that new standard into our existing rule," said NFHS Baseball Rules Committee Chairman Greg Brewer.

The committee also modified rules pertaining to coaches uniforms. Rule 3-2-1 was changed to state that a coach who is not in his or her team's uniform shall be restricted to the bench or dugout and cannot enter the field unless one of his or her players is ill or injured. Along the same lines, any coach occupying the coach's box must be dressed in his or her team's uniform.

Also, Rule 3-1-1 was clarified so that if an illegal player on either offense or defense is discovered by an umpire, that player shall be restricted to the bench or dugout for the rest of the game. If an illegal offensive player re-enters the game, he will be called out immediately and ejected; an illegal defensive player will simply be ejected.

Baseball is the fourth-most popular sport among boys at the high school level with 453,792 participants during the 2002-03 season, according to the High School Athletics Participation Survey conducted by the NFHS. It also ranks third in school sponsorship with 14,988 schools offering the sport.

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