NFHS Softball

2013 Rules Changes
Major Editorial Changes
Points of Emphasis
Softball Glove 
(1-4-1b,c)

- Added that the color of the softball glove/mitt not be entirely optic yellow and that they do not have optic yellow markings on the outside or inside of the glove/mitt resembling the appearance of a softball.
Scorekeeping Materials
(3-6-10)

- Notes that objects other than stopwatches, scorekeeping materials and devices are prohibited in the coach's box.
- The running game is an important and exciting part of the game. Allowing coaches in the coaching box to use a stop watch to time a pitcher’s release to the plate and possibly the subsequent throw to second base is important information to determine if a steal should be implemented.
- This rule allows for the use of the stopwatch and scorebook while in the coaching box. It is not permissible for anyone to have a cell phone in the coaching box.
Batter Awarded First Base
(6-1-1 Exception)

- Clarifies when a batter is awarded first base from an illegal pitch.

- There are times when the batter could become a base runner without hitting an illegal pitch. This would allow a consistent penalty for illegal pitch regardless if the batter hits the illegal pitch or not.
Hit Batter
(8-1-2 Penalty 1)

- Identifies when a hit batter is awarded first base and that she may not deliberately move to allow the ball to touch her in the batter's box.
- A batter is penalized for prohibiting a pitch from entering the strike zone, there should be a penalty when the pitcher hits a batter when the pitch is completely inside the batter’s box. The batter cannot move to allow the ball to touch her in the batter’s box.

Batter Hit By Pitch
8-1-2 Penalty 1

If pitch is within the batter’s box, batter does not have to make an attempt to avoid getting hit.
Defines the Knob (1-5-2a)

- Defines the knob component of the bat and clarifies that it may be molded, lathed, welded or permanently fastened.
- Devices, attachments or wrappings that cause the knob to become flush with the handle are permitted.
- The knob may be covered with grip tape.
Head Coach (3-3-3)

- Identifies that the person the Plate Umpire should announce any changes to and substitutions on the lineup card would be the opposing Head Coach.
  
- This rule change creates uniformity with other umpire in team game management communication by specifically stating the person responsible for his/her team, the Head Coach, is guaranteed to be kept in this substitution information exchange process.
Substitutions
3-3-3

Umpires should record all substitutions on the lineup card and immediately announce any change(s) to the opposing team's head coach.

DP/FLEX Option
(3-3-6)

- A team that intends to utilize the DP/FLEX option advises the Plate Umpire and their opponent during the exchange of line-up cards at the pregame conference.

- This change would require teams to make known the desire to use the DP/FLEX at the time the line-ups become official.
Any change with the DP/Flex must be made at the pregame conference.

Interference
(3-5-6 Penalty)

- Clarifies that if in the judgment of the umpire, the interference prevented a possible double play, the batter and runner closest to home shall be declared out. Other runners shall be returned to the last base at the time of interference.
Interference 3-5-6 Penalty

If, in the judgment of the umpire, the interference is intentional, base runners shall be returned to the last base touched at the time of interference.

Offensive Interference

Rule 3-5-6; 7-4-12; 8-6-16

Batter and runner may be out due to coach interference.
Clarification of Legality
(6-1-2c)

- Clarifies the legality of a hole created in front of the pitcher's plate.
- If a hole has been created in front of the pitcher’s plate, the pivot foot may be no higher than the level plane of the ground.
- The pivot foot may remain in contact with or may push off and drag away from the pitching plate prior to the front foot touching the ground, as long as the pivot foot remains in contact with the ground and within the 24-inch length. If a hole has been created in front of the pitcher’s plate, the pivot foot may be no higher than the level plane of the ground. Pushing off with the pivot foot from a place other than the pitcher’s plate is illegal (6-1-2c).

Illegal Pitch
6-1-2c

Illegal
Legal
Batter’s Feet Position
(7-3-1)

- Clarifies the batter's feet position within the batter's box.
- The batter’s feet must be completely within the batter’s box when the pitcher is ready to pitch.
- A batter may not delay the game by failing to promptly take her position with both feet completely inside the batter’s box within 10 seconds after the ball is returned to the pitcher to prepare for the next pitch, or by stepping out of the box when the pitcher is on the pitcher’s plate.

Batting 7-3-1

Batter risks having a strike called while being out of position.

Both feet of the batter must be completely within the lines when the pitcher is on the pitching plate.
NFHS Softball

2013
Points of Emphasis

Flex/Designated Player Education

- The DP/Flex Rule was instituted to encourage further participation and flexibility of the game. The overall impact of this rule has been positive, however there still remains some confusion/challenges with the understanding of the rule.

- Support Information can be found at
  - Officials – NFHS Central Hub
    [www.arbitersports.com](http://www.arbitersports.com) under Softball Resources and Video tab
  - Coaches – [www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org)
Many umpires and coaches need to better understand the DP/Flex rule, which enables more participant opportunities for student-athletes and more flexibility to coaches.

**Bench Personnel Conduct (Homerun Celebrations)**

- When a batter hits an over the fence or out of the park home run it is an exciting event which many times results in a celebration by all team members coming onto the field.
- This celebration is allowed, however, the following precautions need to be taken:
  - All team members must remain behind the home plate umpire;
  - Allow all runners to contact home plate before engaging in the celebration.
Bench and Field Conduct

Plate umpire should restrain players from gathering around home plate after a home run to ensure that runner properly touches the plate.

Risk Minimization (Sliding Injuries)

- The NFHS has always been committed to risk minimization. Citing an increase in injuries associated with sliding during competition, the NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee has suggested an emphasis on teaching proper sliding techniques during practice.
Proper Sliding

Coaches are encouraged to teach proper sliding techniques, which are essential for student-athletes to avoid injuries.

Concussion Procedure Reminder
(3-3-9; 10-2-3k)

- Procedure requires an athlete exhibiting signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion to be removed from the contest.
Concussion Procedure Revised
(3-3-9; 10-2-3k)

Suggested Guidelines for Management of Concussion

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.

Common Symptoms of Concussion Include:
- Headache
- Nausea
- Vertigo or dizziness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Vision problems
- Impaired balance or gait
- Difficulty with memory
- Numbness
- Sensitivity to light or sound
- Dizziness, near fainting
- Drowsiness
- Socket pain

Suggested Concussion Management:
1. No athlete should return to play (PFP) or practice on the same day of a concussion.
2. If the athlete continued playing even after the symptoms began, they should be removed from the game immediately. The athlete should be monitored closely and allowed to return only after appropriate supervision.
3. Any athlete with a concussion should be medically cleared by an appropriate health care professional prior to resuming participation in any practice or competition, and only after completing the concussion management protocol as detailed in this NFHS Softball Rules Book.

For further details please see the "NFHS Suggested Guidelines for Management of Concussion" at www.nfhs.org.

See Appendix B on Page 89 of the 2013 NFHS Softball Rules Book