

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE
HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS



2024 Softball Rules Interpretations

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SITUATION 1: In the third inning, Team A's pitcher slides the pivot foot forward past the pitching plate pushing off to start the pitch from a place other than the pitching plate.

RULING: Illegal pitch. The pitcher must start the pitch and push forward from the pitching plate. (6-1-2c)

SITUATION 2: As Team A takes the field, Team A's pitcher (a) takes a handful of dirt then drops it and does not wipe the hand prior to contacting the ball, (b) touches a towel in the back pocket that contains an approved drying agent and does not wipe the hand prior to contacting the ball, (c) takes a handful of dirt and begins to rub the dirt onto the ball, (d) takes the ball and begins rubbing it into the dirt.

RULING: Legal in (a) and (b). Dirt is not a foreign substance and does not have to be removed from the hand prior to contacting the ball. Approved drying agents are allowed under the supervision and control of the umpire and are not required to be wiped off prior to contacting the ball. Once a towel with a drying agent has been removed from its packaging to be used in a game, it is very difficult to verify what material the towel is infused with. This drying agent should be allowed unless it is determined that the material on the towel is transferring to or discoloring the ball. If material is transferred to the ball or if the ball becomes discolored, the umpire should have this towel removed for the remainder of the game. Illegal in (c) and (d). In both of these cases, the player is defacing the ball by taking the dirt and rubbing it into the ball in (c) and rubbing the ball into the dirt in (d). In both cases this action is not allowed. Although dirt is not a foreign substance and it is allowed to be used to dry the hand, it is not allowed to be used to deface the ball.

SITUATION 3: During the fourth inning, Team B's shortstop (a) picks up the pitcher's rosin bag and uses it to dry the hands, (b) is seen touching a towel with an approved drying agent in the back pocket. The umpire rules this is illegal as only the pitcher is allowed to use drying agents.

RULING: Incorrect ruling. Although the pitcher is typically the player who uses drying agents, any player is allowed to use these to dry a hand. The use by other players is enforced in the same way as for pitchers, if any material is transferred to the ball or the ball becomes discolored, they must discontinue use of the material.

SITUATION 4: During the sixth inning of a game, (a) a police chase has ended at a house across the street from the field with officers surrounding the house; (b) spectators are beginning to argue and it is escalating quickly and multiple spectators are becoming involved. In both cases, the umpire determines that conditions have become unacceptable to continue play and calls (ends) the game.

RULING: Correct ruling. Umpire jurisdiction is limited to the confines of the field of play. Items outside of the field of play, like spectator behavior or other external conditions, are monitored and controlled by event management. Absent a designated event manager, the home team’s head coach assumes this responsibility. Most situations never reach a level that would be considered dangerous or severe enough to cause a concern for participant safety. However, if conditions become unacceptable for play due to spectator conduct, umpires have the authority to call (end) the contest. Again, this is a very rare occurrence, and all attempts should be made to have event management control the situation prior to ending a contest. If the umpire determines that activities outside of the playing area have made it unacceptable to continue play, they should call (end) the game and have the student-athletes removed from these conditions. In accordance with Rule 4-2-3, state associations may adopt game-ending procedures to determine how games called (ended) due to these conditions shall be completed. In lieu of these procedures, it is recommended that Rule 4-2-2 is used to determine the outcome of the game. (4-2- 2, 4-2-3, 4-2-7)

SITUATION 5: During the first inning of a game, Team A’s coach points out that Team B’s batting helmets have the older NOCSAE stamp (see figures on the next page) and do not have the current stamp shown in Figure 1-8. The umpire rules Team B is not allowed to use these helmets and can only use helmets with the new stamp as shown in the current 2024 NFHS Softball Rules Book.

RULING: Incorrect ruling. Figures 1-8 and 1-9 were updated to reflect the current NOCSAE stamp. The only change in this new stamp is the wording above the boxed area of the stamp. As long as the helmet has the correct helmet drawing (batting helmet shown in Figure 1-8 and catcher’s helmet shown in 1-9) and the words “Meets NOCSAE Standard” inside the boxed area of the stamp they are allowed to be used. In addition, they must comply with the other requirements for helmets listed in 1-6 for batting helmets and 1-7 for catcher’s helmets.

Figures 1-8,1-9

