



May 22, 2023

NFHS Softball Weekly Rule Interpretations

Situation 1: With one ball and one strike, B1 squares to bunt in the right hand batter's box and hits the ball that goes off the bat and deflects toward the left hand batter's box. F2 stretches out and catches the ball while it is still in the air. Since the ball did not rise above the batter's head the umpire rules this a foul tip. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. There is no height requirement associated with a batted ball being able to be caught for an out. A foul tip, by definition, is a batted ball that goes sharply and directly from the bat to the catcher's mitt or hand and is legally caught by the catcher. In this case, the ball was deflected toward the right side of the catcher where they had to stretch out in order to catch the batted ball. This should not be considered a foul tip, but it is a batted ball that is caught in flight and the batter should be ruled out. (2-25-2; 8-2-3)

Situation 2: With R1 on second base and no outs, B2 is up to bat. R1 is stealing third on the pitch. In (a) B2 remains in the batter's box and does not move after the pitch reaches F2. In (b) B2 remains in the batter's box but moves toward the back of the batter's box after the pitch reaches F2. In (c) the batter remains in the batter's box but moves toward the front of the box as F2 is throwing near the back of the box. In both (a) and (b), F2's throw to attempt to make a play on R1 at third base contacts B2, in (c) F2's throw is not altered by B2's movement. In all cases, the umpire rules B2 out for interference and places R1 back on second base. **RULING:** Correct ruling in (b) incorrect ruling in (a) and (c). When the batter remains in the batter's box and makes any movement that hinders the catcher's attempt to play on a runner, they are guilty of interference. Since the batter made no movement to hinder F2 in (a) they are not guilty of interference. The ball should remain live and R1's advancement would be legal. In (b) since B2 did move and that movement hindered F2's attempt to play on the runner, they should be ruled out and R1 would be returned to the last base touched prior to the interference. The batter's actions do not have to be intentional to be guilty of interference, if they move within the batter's box and in the umpire's judgement their movement hinders F2's attempt to play on a runner they are guilty of interference. In (c) since the batter's movement did not hinder F2's attempt to play on a runner there is no interference. Simply moving in the batter's box is not interference; however, any movement that hinders the catcher's attempt to play on a runner (as mentioned in (b)) would result in interference being ruled. Intent is not a consideration in batter interference, if the umpire judges that the batter's movement hindered F2's attempt to play on a runner, interference should be ruled regardless of intent. (7-4-4)

Situation 3: With R1 on second base and no outs, B2 hits a hard line drive back at the pitcher that deflects off the pitcher's arm and bounces straight toward F6. As F6 is moving to field the ball R1 contacts F6. The umpire rules that R1 is out for interference and places B2 on first base, since F6 is considered to be making the initial play on a fair batted ball. **RULING:** Correct ruling. Since F1 was the only fielder to contact the ball, F6 is still considered to be making the initial play on the batted ball. If R1 interferes with F6's ability to make the play this is considered interference, the ball becomes dead, R1 is out and B2 is awarded first base on a fielder's choice. (2-47-3a&b; 8-6-10a)