



2023 NFHS SOFTBALL RULES INTERPRETATIONS

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SITUATION 1: In the bottom of the first inning, a spectator becomes unruly and begins shouting obscene language at the players and umpires. The plate umpire confronts and ejects the spectator while instructing the spectator to leave the facility. **RULING:** Incorrect procedure. Umpire jurisdiction is limited to the confines of the field and covers issues with players, coaches and bench personnel. Site administration has the responsibility for dealing with unruly spectators. In this situation, the umpire should have contacted the site administrator to deal with the unruly spectator. If the designated site administrator or another person of authority from the host school is not immediately available, these duties fall upon the home team's head coach if the coach is the only representative of the host school present.

SITUATION 2: As Team A takes the field, the umpire notices several players are wearing small stud earrings. The umpire rules these earrings are not allowed to be worn during the game. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. The rule prohibiting jewelry has been eliminated, allowing players to now wear jewelry while playing. Jewelry is now permitted, and umpires should no longer scrutinize players to determine if they are wearing jewelry. In the extremely rare case that a player is wearing an item of jewelry that is so distracting that it draws an umpire's attention, a judgment must be made if the item can safely be worn during the game. If the umpire determines the item cannot safely be worn, the umpire should inform Team A's coach that the item must be removed in order for the player to participate in the game.

SITUATION 3: Team B's pitcher is wearing a smartwatch. In the third inning, the umpire notices F1 receiving signals via text from the coach in the dugout. The umpire stops the game before a pitch is thrown and informs Team B's coach that the player is violating the rule prohibiting use of electronic devices for coaching purposes outside of the dugout. Team B's coach disagrees, telling the umpire that F1 is not transmitting data, only receiving the data so it is not a violation. The umpire informs the coach that the player has violated the rule, and this is F1's warning. The pitcher must discontinue use of the smartwatch or F1 will be ejected. **RULING:** Correct ruling. Rule 1-8-6 allows team personnel to transmit information only within the team's dugout/bench area. Transmission of data requires an individual to send the signal to a player who receives that transmission. F1 is receiving the data outside of the dugout/bench area and is in violation of Rule 1-8-6. Rule 3-6-11 also covers this topic and is even more clear in its wording. This rule states that electronic devices used for coaching purposes may be used only within the dugout/bench area. Obtaining a signal for what pitch to throw is clearly a coaching purpose and F1 is also clearly outside of the dugout/bench area when receiving that signal. For violating Rule 3-6-11, it is umpire discretion as to the severity of the offense. If it is judged to be a minor infraction, the umpire may warn the offender or the umpire may eject the offender for the first offense. In this case, the umpire judged the offense to be minor and gave a warning since play was stopped prior to F1 throwing the pitch that had been illegally received. (1-8-6, 3-6-11)

SITUATION 4: R1 of Team B is called out while attempting to steal home on a close play at the plate. After Team B's head coach consults with an assistant coach near the dugout, footage from a tablet on the close play at the plate is shared with the umpire. As the coach is showing the video to the umpire, it is evident to the umpire that the camera angle of the video is from behind home plate. The umpire ejects the coach for violating the rule prohibiting the use of electronic equipment outside of the dugout. **RULING:** Correct ruling. Currently, the rules state that recording and using the footage for coaching purposes during the game is only permitted within the team's dugout/bench area. Although an umpire should not examine dugouts to determine how a team is utilizing electronic equipment, in this situation, the coach brought the video to the umpire's attention and, therefore, the umpire must enforce the rule. In addition to the improper use of electronic equipment, use of video to review a play with an umpire is not permissible in NFHS Softball. (1-8-6, 3-6-11, 10-1-4)

SITUATION 5: After the third out in the top of the first inning, the plate umpire removes a stopwatch from a ball bag and begins timing the players as they switch from offense to defense. **RULING:** Incorrect procedure. Pitchers have a maximum of one minute to throw up to five pitches in between innings. The intent of this rule is to maintain a good flow of the game. There are other rules within the NFHS Softball Rules Book that have timing aspects for players: time for the batter to enter the batter's box, time for the pitcher to deliver the next pitch after receiving the ball, and time the pitcher must have their hands together prior to starting the pitch, as examples. As with these rules, the umpire does not use a clock/watch for this timing. (6-1-1c, 6-2-5, 6-4-8, 7-3-1)

SITUATION 6: A player on Team A has a glove with the name of the manufacturer printed in optic yellow. The umpire informs Team A's coach that this glove is illegal, due to the optic yellow markings on the glove. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. Gloves are not permitted to have any portion that is the color of the ball, including lacing and seams. The only restriction on a manufacturer's logo or name is it does not give the appearance of the ball. Although the umpire was incorrect in ruling the glove illegal simply for having any optic yellow marking, the glove would be considered illegal if that optic-colored marking were to give the appearance of the ball. (1-4-1)