



April 8, 2024

NFHS Softball Weekly Rule Interpretations

Situation 1: Team A is up to bat with R1 on second and R2 on first with no outs, B3 hits a sinking line drive that is caught by F8. R1 was off with the hit and is called out on appeal at second base for leaving prior to the fly ball being first touched. The defense celebrates and rolls the ball back to the pitching circle and starts to exit the field thinking this was the third out of the inning. Seeing the defense exiting the field, R2 on first base begins walking toward their dugout. Prior to the runner entering dead ball territory both coaches realize that was only the second out and R2 returns to first base as F9 picks up the ball from the circle and holds it until F1 returns to the circle then hands the ball back to F1. Team B's coach asks the umpires to rule R2 out as they abandoned their base and were almost to their dugout. The umpires rule that since the runner never entered dead ball territory there is no violation. They bring B4 up to bat with a runner on first base and two outs. **RULING:** Correct ruling. Until a runner has entered dead ball territory, they are not considered to have abandoned their base. (8-6-19)

Situation 2: With no outs and R1 on third base, the infield is playing in with F5 about 15-20 feet in front of third base and F6 playing just behind the pitching circle closer to second base. B2 hits a sharp ground ball down the third baseline that passes F5 untouched and hits R1 as they are diving back into third base. In a) R1 has just touched third base prior to being hit with the ball. In b) R1 has not touched third base when they are hit with the ball. In both cases, the umpire rules the ball remains live since it had passed a fielder prior to touching R1. In a) R1 is not out since they were in contact with the base when they were hit and did not intentionally interfere with the ball or a fielder. In b) R1 is not out since the ball had passed a fielder prior to being contacted and in the umpires judgement no other fielder had an opportunity to make an out. **RULING:** Correct ruling in both cases. If a runner is hit with a fair batted ball that has passed a fielder other than the pitcher and no other fielder had a chance to make an out the ball remains live. In a) when a runner is in contact with the base when they are hit with the fair batted ball they are not out unless they intentionally interfere with the ball or a fielder making a play. In b) a runner that is hit with a fair untouched batted ball while not in contact with a base after it has passed a fielder other than the pitcher is not out unless the umpire judges that another fielder had an opportunity to make an out. (8-4-1f, 8-6-11, 8-8-4, 8-8-13)

Situation 3: With R1 on first base and not outs, B2 hits a sharp ground ball toward F3. F3 attempts to play the ball but it deflects off their glove and hits R1 in the back as they are running toward second base. R1 did not see the deflected ball and did not alter the way they were running to second base. The umpire rules a dead ball and calls R1 out due to interference as they judged that F4 had the opportunity to make an out. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. Once a batted ball is touched by any fielder, the runner must intentionally contact the batted ball to be guilty of interference. Since the runner did not alter their path to intentionally contact the ball the runner should not be called out and the ball should remain live. (8-6-12, 8-8-6)