



Ohio High School Athletic Association

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Director of Officials' Development – Baseball

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Hard to believe, but after this Saturday, we only have one more week in the regular season. The high school baseball season goes so fast. This last week of the regular season still has major implications and importance to teams as many conference and league titles are still at stake, and teams will want to enter the sectional tournament riding positive momentum. Bottom line, let's continue the outstanding officiating that has marked this season; i.e., let's finish the regular season with excellence.

Some items for this week:

- 1. Team activity during the other team's infield** – The practice of a team coming out of their dugout to watch their opponent's warm up drills and infield is beginning to occur more often in the state. This "strategy" is normally intended to intimidate the other team, which too often can lead to starting the game off with some unpleasantries between the two teams. The rule came about when, in one part of the nation, a team had the habit of kneeling on one knee close to the foul line when the other team was taking infield. They would laugh and talk loudly whenever a mistake was made during the warm-ups by the other team. The second baseman got tired of it and sent his next throw to first base, not to first, but into the line of players, starting a brawl and ending the possibility of a game for that day. The rule requires that a team not be in live territory (other than a bullpen area) during the opponent's infield practice prior to the start of the game. Usually, a gentle reminder and professional request to the coach should result in the team being where they need to be. Be courteous but insistent.
- 2. Use of batting cages during a game** –By casebook play and Approved Rulings, a team may use, during the course of a game, its batting cage facility. Many teams do so to get their batters ready for their upcoming at-bat. However, if there is only one batting cage/facility at the field, it must be made available to both teams; it cannot be restricted to only one team's sole use. If the home team is not willing to "share" the batting cage, then no one is allowed to use it. My suggestion is not go looking for the issue, let it come to you and then properly handle it. Additionally, if the use of the batting cage/facility becomes distracting to the game itself, the plate umpire has the authority to deny its use to both teams.
- 3. Infield practice during a pitching change** – Many times, during a pitching change a coach will make a substitution in the infield as well. A team may have the first

baseman, or another player, throw ground balls to the new infielder (or even just toss with him), provided it ends when the new pitcher has completed his allotted warm up throws. A team, cannot, however have a fielder in the game throw a baseball for the purpose of warming up as a pitcher, during a defensive conference or a pitching change. If they desire to warm up a player in the game to prepare him to pitch, they would need to take him out of the game to warm up and then later re-enter him under the substitution rule.

- 4. Third to first move** – There has been several associations around the state where the MLB rule change to eliminate the third to first move has created some confusion for the high school game. The third to first move remains legal in high school. The pitcher may still legally attempt a pickoff or feint a pickoff to third by stepping “directly” to the base and gaining ground. He does not have to first disengage the pitching plate to throw or feint to third base. Please, if we balk this move, let it be for not complying with a legal pickoff move, not because it was “the third to first move is no longer legal, coach.”

- 5. Blood on an Umpire’s uniform or equipment** – High school baseball rules require that if there is any amount of blood on a player or coach’s uniform, it shall be changed or cleaned before that individual participates again. If it is not possible to clean the uniform and there is no other team uniform available, it is permissible for the player to wear what he can to participate. Reasonable accommodations should be allowed in that uniform; i.e., a uniform from the J.V. team or an away uniform or even a T-shirt. The same principle holds for umpires. The NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee recently re-affirmed that if blood is on an umpire’s uniform, he/she will need to have it cleaned if a trainer is present with the proper solution, or change his uniform/ gear. If he is unable to do so and he does not have spare clothing, and his partner does not have any gear or uniform pieces that will fit, it is permissible to wear what is needed to be able to finish the game. I promise not to be upset with an umpire being “out of uniform.” We just cannot continue with untreated blood on a uniform or equipment. If nothing is available for an umpire to change into, then the game shall be suspended.

That is it for this week. Please continue to call or email with questions, plays, or issues. Hope to see you on the field.

Yours in baseball,

Kyle McNeely