



March 13, 2023

NFHS Softball Weekly Rule Interpretations

Situation 1: Team A, the home team, starts the game with 9 players. In the third inning, B3 becomes ill and leaves the game and Team A continues the game playing shorthanded taking an out when B3's spot in the lineup is reached. In the bottom of the 6th inning, R1 (B5) slides into home scoring the tying run but injures an ankle and is carried off the field. The plate umpire declares the game a forfeit at this point, as the umpire does not believe B5 will return resulting in Team A only having 7 players **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. It is true that a team cannot continue a game with only 7 players, but at the time the umpire declared a forfeit, Team A had not failed to provide 8 players to continue the game. B5 could have recovered from the injury and been able to continue, or an eligible substitute could have arrived in time to take a position in the lineup.

The game should not be ruled a forfeit until Team A fails to provide 8 players to continue the game. This could occur in the following manner:

- a) Team A's coach reports to the umpire that B5 is leaving the game and they have no legal substitute to replace them leaving them with only 7 players. (4-3-1g)
- b) Team A continues to bat in the 6th inning and reaches B5's position in the lineup, B5 is not able to bat, and no substitute has arrived to enter the lineup leaving them with only 7 players. (4-3-1g)
- c) Team A completes their turn at bat and takes the field on defense. As part of the lineup, a player has a fielding position, and all players are required to be in fair ground at the time of the pitch except the catcher who must be in the catcher's box. If Team A is only able to place 7 players on defense the game would be a forfeit. (3-1-3; 3-1-5; 4-1-3g)

Situation 2: With R1 on first base and no outs, B2 hits the ball to F4 who steps on second base to retire R1 and B2 is safe at first base. As R1 continues running toward their third base dugout, F4 throws the ball back to F1. F1 seeing R1 continuing to run toward third, throws the ball to F5 at third base while B2 remains at first base. The umpire rules that although the retired R1 continued to run drawing a throw, there was no play to interfere with as B2 remained at first base so there is no violation. **RULING:** Correct ruling. Rule 8-6-16c states that a runner continuing to run and drawing a throw "may be considered" a form of interference. In this case, since there was no play to interfere with it should not be considered interference. (8-6-16; 8-6-16c)

Situation 3: With R1 on first base and no outs, B2 has a 0 ball 2 strike count when they swing at the next pitch that F2 does not catch. B2 as a normal reaction to a dropped third strike begins running to first base, the plate umpire announces, "Batter is out, Batter is out". R1 seeing the ball is dropped attempts to steal second base. F2 throws the ball toward F3 but overthrows them resulting in the ball ending up in right field. R1 seeing the overthrow continues to third base, B2 realizes about halfway to first base that they are out and begins moving toward the first base dugout. The umpire rules that R1 is out since

B2 was out on the pitch and still ran drawing a throw to first base. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. Rule 8-6-16c has an exception that it is not interference if a batter-runner mistakenly runs on a dropped third strike and draws a throw. As long as B2 only drew a throw and did not commit an act of interference (example: being hit by the throw to F3 attempting to make a play on R1 coming back to first base) they would not be guilty of interference. (8-6-16c)

Situation 4: With R1 on first base and no outs, B2 has a 2 ball 2 strike count when they swing at the next pitch that F2 does not catch. B2 as a normal reaction to a dropped third strike begins running to first base, the plate umpire announces, "Batter is out, Batter is out". R1 seeing the ball is dropped attempts to steal second base. F2 throws the ball toward F3 but overthrows them resulting in the ball ending up in right field. R1 seeing the overthrow continues to third base, B2 touches first base and continues to second base and F9 throws the ball to F4 at second base. In a) R1 is two steps from third base as F9 releases the throw and does not attempt to advance home on the throw to second base. In b) R1 is two steps from third base and attempts to advance home on the throw to second base. In a) the umpire rules there is no interference for drawing a throw since there was no play to interfere with. Although B2 continued to run to second base drawing a throw, R1 remained at third base so in their judgement there was no play to interfere with. In b) the umpire rules R1 is out due to interference from B2 continuing to run after being called out and drawing a throw, interfering with the defenses ability to make a play on R1 advancing home. **RULING:** Correct rulings in a and b. Rule 8-6-16c has an allowance stating it is not interference if a batter-runner mistakenly runs on a dropped third strike and draws a throw. This exception is intended to allow the batter-runner that is taught to always run on a dropped third strike to run without being ruled out if they draw a throw. However, this allowance is limited to the player's actions in accordance with a dropped third strike, which is running toward first base. Once B2 passes first base they are no longer running in accordance with a dropped third strike, and the protection afforded them is no longer in place. If they continue to advance past first base, they should be considered like any other offensive player that has been retired. If they draw a throw that interferes with the defenses opportunity to make a play, they are guilty of interference. Since B2 has already been put out, the runner closest to home would be called out due to this interference. (8-6-16; 8-6-16c)