

High School Softball Rules Amended to Permit Metal Cleats in 2008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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INDIANAPOLIS, IN (July 9, 2007) -- High school softball players will be permitted to wear metal cleats and metal toe plates beginning with the 2008 season.

This change in Rule 3-2-11 is one of three rules revisions approved by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Softball Rules Committee at its annual meeting June 10-12 in Indianapolis. The rules changes subsequently were approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

"Metal cleats provide better traction for athletes on nearly all surfaces, including hard, wet or under-maintained fields," said Cindy Simmons, chair of the NFHS Softball Rules Committee and assistant executive director of the Oregon School Activities Association. "They also help prevent slippage on the bases, especially home plate."

Current rules prohibit runners from illegal tactics when sliding, and if sliding is executed correctly, the risk of defensive players being "spiked" will decrease.

In another change, Rule 7-3-1 states that a batter shall take her position in the batter's box within 10 seconds after the ball is returned to the pitcher in the circle. Previously, the batter was permitted 20 seconds to enter the box, and the pitcher was also allotted 20 seconds to deliver the pitch.

"Before this change, we had two sets of rules in conflict with one another," Simmons said. "By allowing the batter 10 seconds to enter the box, the pitcher now has the other 10 seconds to step on the pitcher's plate and deliver the pitch. This change clarifies previous confusion and keeps the game flowing."

The final rules revision, Rule 3-6-7, restricts the head coach to the dugout when a second, unreported substitution occurs. Head coaches are held responsible for reporting all substitutions, and if a second infraction occurs, he or she is held accountable along with the player.

The committee also approved major editorial changes in addition to the rules changes. Rule 1-5-4 clarifies what constitutes a legal bat, stating that bats must meet the 2004 ASA Bat Performance Standard, bear either the 2000 or 2004 certification mark and not be on the ASA non-approved list.

Rule 2-5-3, new Rule 8-2-13 and Rule 8-6-15 all specify when an on-deck batter is subject to interference and clarifies the penalty associated with the infraction.

Rule 3-6-6 adds that bat and ball shaggers are permitted out of the dugout. In addition, bench personnel are permitted out of the dugout between innings for warm-up purposes.

"There have been misconceptions about where individuals need to be during specific points of the game," said Mary Struckhoff, NFHS assistant director and liaison to the Softball Rules Committee. "We want state associations to be aware that it is legal for the bench to engage in throwing and running activities during the one minute designated for the pitcher to warm up at the beginning of each half inning."

The committee also identified three points of emphasis for the 2008 season. These include pitching, equipment and the use of proper softball signals by umpires.

Softball is the fourth-most popular sport among girls at the high school level with 369,094 participants during the 2005-06 season, according to the High School Athletics Participation Survey conducted by the NFHS. It also ranks third in school sponsorship for girls across the nation with 14,710 schools.

This press release was written by Nikki Miller, a summer semester intern in the NFHS publications/communications department and a senior at the University of Dayton (Ohio), majoring in journalism and Spanish.

About the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) The NFHS, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the national leadership organization for high school sports and fine arts activities. Since 1920, the NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and fine arts activities that help students succeed in their lives. The NFHS sets direction for the future by building awareness and support, improving the participation experience, establishing consistent standards and rules for competition, and helping those who oversee high school sports and activities. The NFHS writes playing rules for 17 sports for boys and girls at the high school level. Through its 50 member state associations and the District of Columbia, the NFHS reaches more than 18,500 high schools and 11 million participants in high school activity programs, including more than 7 million in high school sports. As the recognized national authority on interscholastic activity programs, the NFHS conducts national meetings; sanctions interstate events; produces publications for high school coaches, officials and athletic directors; sponsors professional organizations for high school coaches, officials, spirit coaches, speech and debate coaches and music adjudicators; and serves as a national information resource of interscholastic athletics and activities. For more information, visit the NFHS Web site at www.nfhs.org.

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