Baseball Points of Emphasis - 2027

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The NFHS Baseball Rules Committee and the NFHS Board of Directors believes there are areas of the game of interscholastic baseball that need to be addressed and given special attention. These areas of concern are often cyclical, some areas need more attention than others, and that is why they might appear in the rules book for consecutive editions. These concerns are identified as "Points of Emphasis." For the 2027 high school baseball season, attention is being called to: Video and Audio Usage, Players and Coaches Apparel, Pitching Rules and Pitcher Protection Enhancement, Sportsmanship and Gamesmanship vs Travesty. When a topic is included in the Points of Emphasis, these topics are important enough to reinforce throughout the academic year because they are not being given the proper attention.

Video and Audio Usage

The use of wearable microphones, cameras or any other audio or video recording devices by players while participating in a live high school baseball contest is not permitted. Although these technologies have become more common in other levels of baseball and media broadcasts, the educational mission of high school athletics must remain the priority. Student safety, competitive equity, privacy and minimizing unnecessary distractions are paramount. Players are expected to focus on competition and their responsibilities to teammates rather than the production of entertainment or media content. While schools or media outlets may capture video and audio from approved locations outside the field of play, participants shall not wear or operate these devices while actively competing.

Players and Coaches Apparel

The appearance of players and coaches should reflect the values of education-based athletics and the traditions of high school baseball. Uniforms and apparel are intended to promote team unity, professionalism and school pride, not to serve as platforms for individual expression or commercial promotion. Allow your play to be your individual expression or statement. Coaches are responsible for ensuring that all players are legally and properly equipped before each contest and that uniforms and accessories comply with NFHS playing rules. Likewise, coaches' attire should be appropriate for the educational setting and project a positive image of the school and the sport. Illegal, altered, trendy or non-compliant apparel and equipment should be addressed before the game begins to avoid unnecessary delays or penalties. By maintaining a consistent and professional appearance, schools reinforce respect for the game, promote safety and demonstrate the high standards expected in education-based athletics.

Pitching Rules and Pitcher Protection Enhancement

Pitching is one of the most influential aspects of high school baseball, and the NFHS remains committed to rules that prioritize student safety, competitive equity and the educational values of the game. Coaches, pitchers and umpires are expected to understand and properly apply all pitching rules, including those governing legal pitching positions, pitching motions, disengagement from the pitcher's plate, balks and illegal pitches. Coaches also have a responsibility to manage pitchers responsibly by recognizing signs of fatigue and adhering to all state association pitching limitation policies. While pitch-count regulations are established and enforced by each state association, protecting the health and well-being of the pitcher is a shared responsibility among coaches, game officials and school administrators. Proper pitching mechanics, adherence to the rules and timely removal of fatigued pitchers not only reduce the risk of injury but also preserve the integrity of the game. The NFHS encourages all participants to remember that developing healthy, fundamentally sound pitchers is more important than any single game or season, ensuring that students can continue to enjoy baseball safely for years to come.

Sportsmanship

High school baseball is an extension of the classroom where student-athletes learn lessons that extend far beyond the final score. Coaches, players, umpires

and spectators all share the responsibility of demonstrating respect for opponents, teammates, officials and the game itself. While enthusiasm and emotion are a natural part of competition, taunting, excessive celebrations, gamesmanship that diminishes the integrity of the game, and behavior intended to embarrass or provoke others are inconsistent with the values of education-based athletics. Coaches are expected to model sportsmanship and self-control, while players should compete with passion, humility and respect. Every contest provides an opportunity to demonstrate character by winning with honor, losing with grace and preserving the traditions and integrity of high school baseball.

Gamesmanship vs. Travesty

Baseball has long embraced strategy, legal deception and creativity as integral parts of competition. However, there is a clear distinction between legitimate gamesmanship and conduct that makes a travesty of the game. Gamesmanship includes legal tactics designed to gain a competitive advantage within the spirit and intent of the rules. Conversely, actions that intentionally mock the game, deceive participants through unsporting behavior, create unnecessary confusion, or exploit the rules in a manner never intended undermine the integrity of high school baseball. Coaches are expected to teach respect for both the letter and the spirit of the rules, and players should compete with skill, discipline and sportsmanship. Umpires should address unsporting acts promptly and decisively to maintain order and preserve the educational mission of the sport. The objective of every contest is not only to determine a winner but also to uphold the values of education-based athletics and protect the integrity and traditions of high school baseball.

National Federation of State High School Associations
P.O. Box 690
Indianapolis, IN 46206