Baseball Points of Emphasis - 2025

BY NFHS ON August 12, 2024 | BASEBALL, RULES

The NFHS Baseball Rules Committee and the NFHS Board of Directors believe 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 2025 high school baseball season, attention is being called to: Use of Authenticated Mark Program balls, Proper Pitching Positions, Bench Decorum, Use of Props, and Improper Use of Electronic Communication Equipment. 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 proper attention.

Use of Authenticated Mark Program Balls

The use of baseballs that have the Authenticated Mark printed on them proves that the conforming equipment is essential to the integrity of contests played under the NFHS rules. This program helps to promote a level playing field by ensuring consistency in the equipment being used. Using baseballs that hold the Authenticating Mark allows for the development of more sophisticated standards in balls and clearly communicates to administrators, coaches and officials that these standards are being met.

Pitching Positions

The premise of the pitching positions is very basic, it has evolved over the years to stay current with existing teaching styles and the increasing skill levels of high school age students. It is one of the most talked about and modified rules in the history of NFHS rules writing. We should always be cautious and concerned that the reasons to change the rule is never associated to the whims or trends of other levels of baseball. Pitchers are required to use one of two positions: the wind-up or the set. It is important that umpires, coaches, and players know what position the pitcher is using so they know which part of Rule 6 is in play. The position of the pivot foot determines which of the pitching positions is being used. In the wind-up position, the pitcher’s pivot foot is in contact with the pitcher’s plate and is not parallel to it. They may only deliver a pitch or step backward off the pitcher’s plate with the pivot first. In the set position, the pivot foot is in contact with or directly in front of and parallel to the pitcher’s plate.

Bench Decorum

Sportsmanship, or good sporting behavior, is about treating one another with respect and exhibiting appropriate behavior. It is about being fair, honest and caring. When these types of appropriate behavior occur, competitive play is more enjoyable for everyone. Coaches set the tone at athletic contests with their display of sportsmanship and respect. If these individuals act in a sportsmanlike manner, manage the students in their dugout/bench area, their behavior sets a positive tone for players, spectators and others.

Use of Props

Like Bench Decorum, there is no logical purpose to have props at an education based athletic event. They are not enhancing the educational value of the contest. In fact, they deter from any valuable lesson gained from competing. Unlike the collegiate and professional models, the use of props or any items to demean or embarrass one's opponent is contrary to the reason the NFHS writes playing rules for high school age and skilled students.

Improper Use of Communication Equipment

Last season was the first year of allowing one-way electronic communication devices from the dugout/bench to the catcher. It permits the coach to communicate with the catcher using an electronic communication device for the purpose of calling pitches and setting up the defense. The device would only be able to be one-way, meaning the player cannot use an electronic device to respond or communicate back to the coach. Various technologies, ear-piece style, electronic band or a smart watch could be used giving schools several options at varying costs. No other player would be able to wear or use this device nor would the coach be able to communicate with any other player using electronic communication.