



March 11, 2024

NFHS Softball Weekly Rule Interpretations

Situation 1: With R1 on first base, B2 a left-handed slapper is at bat. B2 moves forward in the box with the pitch but is stationary after the ball reaches the catcher. F2 throws toward first base making contact with B2 who is still within the batter's box near the front of the box. The umpire rules that since the batter did not have any movement after the pitch reached the catcher that hindered their ability to make a play on the runner they are not guilty of interference. **RULING:** Correct ruling. It is allowable for the batter to move within the batter's box while the pitch is on its way to the plate. However, it is not allowable for the batter to have any movement after the pitch reaches the catcher that results in hindering the catchers attempt to play on a runner. (7-4-4c)

Situation 2: With R1 on second base, B2 a right-handed batter is at bat. As R1 is attempting to steal third base, B2 adjusts their footing in the batter's box moving more toward the back of the box. F2 is attempting to throw to F5 at third base ready to apply a tag to R1 but hesitates and does not throw as B2 has moved into their throwing lane. The umpire rules interference as B2 has moved in a manner that hindered F2's ability to make a play on R1. The offensive coach objects claiming that F2 must throw to third for there to be an interference call made. **RULING:** Correct ruling by the umpire. The batter's box is not a safe haven. The batter is entitled to their position in the box in a situation like this, however if the batter moves after the ball reaches the catcher in a manner that, in the umpires judgement, hinders the catcher's ability to make a play on a runner they are guilty of interference. In this case, the ball is dead, B2 is ruled out and R1 is returned to the last base touched at the time of the interference. (7-4-4c)

Situation 3: B1 bunts the ball toward the first base line and is running to first base completely in fair territory. F2 fields the bunt and is prepared to throw to first base but does not throw as B1 is in their throwing lane approximately fifteen feet from first base. The umpire rules interference on B1 as they were outside the three-foot lane and interfered with F2's ability to throw the ball to first base. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. In order for there to be interference by the batter-runner for not being within the three-foot lane there must be a throw to first base. As the rule is written the batter-runner would be called out if, in the umpire's judgement, they interfere with the fielder taking the throw at first base. In order to interfere with the fielder taking the throw at first base there must be a throw and that throw must have been able to be caught by the fielder at first base if not for the actions of the batter-runner. (8-2-6)



March 25, 2024

NFHS Softball Weekly Rule Interpretations

Situation 1: With no runners on base, B1 hits a base hit to right field. As B1 is rounding first base F3 is standing on the corner of the base and B1 is forced to run around F3. The umpire signals and verbalizes “obstruction” and B1 seeing the ball being thrown in to F4 at second base returns to first base. The first base coach seeing and hearing the obstruction call tells B1 to run to second base where they are tagged out easily. The umpire rules that B1 remains out as the obstruction was cancelled once B1 returned to first base, the base they would have reached had there been no obstruction in their judgement.

RULING: Incorrect ruling. A runner cannot be called out between the two bases where they were obstructed, with only six exceptions as listed in rule 8-4-3 Penalty 1, Exceptions. In order for exception (a) to apply, the obstructed runner must reach the base they would have reached had there been no obstruction AND there is a subsequent play on a different runner. In this case there was no subsequent play on a different runner so B1 is still protected between first and second base, in this case when B1 was tagged out the umpire should have called a dead ball and awarded B1 first base, the base they would have reached in their judgement. (8-4-3b Penalty 1, Exception a)

Situation 2: With R1 on second base, B2 hits a base hit toward the center fielder. As B2 is rounding first base they are obstructed by F3 between first and second base. Seeing the ball being returned to F6 at second base B2 returns to first base. R1 has rounded third base and F6 now throws behind R1 trying to make a play on them returning to third base. B2 seeing the throw leaves first base and continues on to second base where they are thrown out on a close play sliding into second base. The umpire rules B2 is out. The offensive coach objects saying B2 was obstructed between first base and second base and cannot be put out between those two bases. **RULING:** Correct ruling by the umpire. Obstructed runners cannot be put out between the two bases where they were obstructed (unless they violate the exceptions listed). In this play, exception (a) was violated. Once B2 returned to first base, the base the umpire judged they would have reached had there been no obstruction, and there was a subsequent play on a different runner (R1 at third base) then B2 is no longer protected between first and second base and they may be put out. (8-4-3b Penalty 1, Exception a)

Situation 3: With R1 on third base, B2 bunts the ball toward F3. F3 fields the ball but holds it to keep R1 from scoring. B2 rounds first base and is obstructed by F4 as they are moving to cover first base causing both B2 and F4 to fall on the ground entangled in a pile. F3 returns the ball to F1 who is standing in the pitching circle. The umpire seeing B2 still laying on the ground calls a dead ball and rules B2 out for violating the look-back rule since they did not immediately return or attempt to advance to the next base. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling as described by the umpire. Since B2 was obstructed between first and second base, they cannot be put out between those two bases unless they violate one of the exceptions listed in 8-4-3b Penalty 1, Exceptions. Violating the look-back rule is not one of those exceptions. The reason this is not an exception, as can be seen in this play, the runner violating the look-back rule can be caused by the obstruction. B2 and F4 falling to the ground and working to get untangled and regain their footing caused B2 to violate the look-back rule as B2 was not able to immediately return to first or attempt to advance to second. The correct enforcement on this play is to call a dead ball when B2 was

put out by violating the look-back rule and award B2 the base they would have reached, in the umpire's judgement, had there not been obstruction. (8-4-3b Penalty 1, 8-7-1&2)