



NFHS 2023 BASEBALL RULE CHANGES

MBUA MEETING 24-OCTOBER-2022

NFHS RULE CHANGES 2023

- Equipment clarification on catcher's helmet and shield
- Jewelry – now allowed
- Lodged Ball – clarification
- Pitching position – Hybrid allowed

NFHS RULE CHANGES 2023 - EQUIPMENT

Rule 1-5-4 added language clarifying that eye shields attached to a catcher's mask after manufacture are prohibited. Eye shields that are attached at the time of manufacture must be clear.

Eye shields that are attached to the catcher's mask at the time of manufacture will be constructed of a molded rigid material and be clear without the presence of any tint. Tinted eyewear worn on the face and under the face mask is permitted.

Rationale: There has been an increase of catchers attaching aftermarket eye shields to their face masks that are tinted and not approved by the face mask manufacturer. Attaching a product that was not manufactured for the specific face mask is a risk to the wearer. The tinted eye shield is problematic because it would prevent a medical professional from accessing the eyes of the catcher to determine their condition.

HOW DO WE MANAGE THIS?

- Pre-game meeting – Is all equipment legal?
- Catcher comes out and shield is tinted, get it removed. No penalty.

NFHS RULE CHANGES 2023 - JEWELRY

High school baseball players and coaches will be permitted to wear jewelry in 2023 after the NFHS Baseball Rules Committee voted to remove its prohibition from the rules. Previously, only medical and religious medals were permitted by rule.

Rationale: While most jewelry will be permitted, the Baseball Rules Committee noted that the current rules still state that any jewelry worn that poses harm or injury to a player or opponent should be removed.

HOW DO WE MANAGE THIS?

- Pre-game meeting – Is all equipment legal?
- Umpire judgement – Don't hunt for an issue, should be clear and obvious.

NFHS RULE CHANGES 2023 – LODGED BALL

2-4-4 (New): Change:

Note: Add Lodged Ball to Section Title

ART. 4 . . . A baseball that remains on the playing field but has become wedged, stuck, lost, or unreachable, is defined to be a lodged ball. If the ball impacts any object in the course of play, stops abruptly, and does not fall or roll immediately, it is considered lodged. It is a dead ball (5-1-1f-3,4; 5-1-1g-4). Exception: if a ball becomes stuck in the webbing of the fielder's glove, it remains in play. The glove/ball combination is treated as a live ball.

Rationale: A definition of a lodged ball was necessary and appropriate to differentiate when it is stuck on the field or in an apparatus, compared to when it is stuck in a glove.

HOW DO WE MANAGE THIS?

- Umpire judgement – Is the ball really stuck?

NFHS RULE CHANGES 2023 – HYBRID PITCHING POSITION IS NOW ALLOWED

Rule 6 was adjusted to only use the pivot foot to determine whether a pitcher is delivering a pitch from the wind-up or set position. Previously, the position of both feet on the pitcher's plate determined either the wind-up or set positions, prohibiting a "hybrid" position where the pivot foot was in the wind-up position and the non-pivot foot was in the set position.

Rationale: "The Rules Committee received tremendous input from coaches and umpires that allowing the 'hybrid' would assist players to succeed in pitching," Hopkins said. "Anytime we can write a rule to improve playability or increase participation, then it is prudent that we do so for the sake of the participants."

HOW DO WE MANAGE THIS?

- The key is going to be position of the pivot foot. If the pivot foot is parallel to the rubber, the pitcher is in the set position.
- If the pivot foot is not parallel to the rubber the pitcher is in the wind-up position.
- Umpire judgement – Try and use common sense, don't be difficult. If you really can't tell, ask the pitcher what they are doing and declare it to everyone. Obviously, this is really important when there is a runner on 3rd base with a possible squeeze play.