

2010 Baseball Rules Changes Include Bat Standards Adjustment

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Elliot Hopkins

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (July 6, 2009) — The clarification of baseball bat specifications was among four rules adjusted by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Baseball Rules Committee at its annual meeting June 7-9 in Indianapolis. The rules changes subsequently were approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

A change to Rule 1-3-2 regarding bat specifications was made in the hope it will clarify bat compliance. The rule, which will be effective January 1, 2012, specifies that the bat should be a “smooth cylinder implement from the top of the cap to the top of the knob.”

“The committee was looking to clarify the rule and make the purchase of bats an easier process,” said Elliot Hopkins, NFHS director of educational services and liaison to the Baseball Rules Committee. “We want to make sure that kids and parents know what is permissible.”

The change will also require that all non-wood bats meet the Batted Ball Coefficient of Restitution (BBCOR) performance standard, which is the standard used by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). Formerly, non-wood bats had to meet the Ball Exit Speed Ratio (BESR) standard.

The new rule also states that non-wood bats must be labeled with a rectangular certification mark “a minimum of a half-inch on each side and located on the barrel of the bat in any contrasting color.” The new standard ensures that performances by non-wood bats are more comparable to those of wood bats. It’s also expected to minimize risk, improve play and increase teaching opportunities.

“After working with the NCAA and having access to its research, we’ve concluded it’s in our best interest to make this change,” Hopkins said. “BBCOR includes the BESR standard, so we’re actually expanding upon our current standard, which will be more appropriate for our age and skill level.”

Another major rule addition applies to assistant coaches and their behavior during the game. Rule 3-3-1g6 prohibits any member of the coaching staff who is not the head coach from leaving “the vicinity of the dugout or coaching box to dispute a judgment call by an umpire.” The penalty for this infraction is that both the head coach and the offending coach will be restricted to the dugout for the remainder of the game. If severe enough, the umpire also has the authority to eject the offending coach and/or the head coach.

The intention of this change is to cut down on the disruptive and counterproductive behavior of assistant coaches. It also reinforces to head coaches that they are responsible for their staff and players.

“The committee found that assistant coaches were taking license with their roles and becoming disruptive,” Hopkins said. “By doing that, they’re sending the wrong message to their players. It’s one thing to ask the official for a clarification, but it’s another to challenge and charge an umpire. We cannot and will not allow that.”

A clarification was made to Rule 1-2-4 concerning the temporary extension of dugouts. The modified rule explains that when the dugout is to be temporarily extended, it shall be extended toward the outfield and not toward home plate.

The final adjustment was made to Rule 7-4-1f, concerning the instances when a batter will be declared out. The change reads that the batter is out if “any member of the offensive team or coach other than the runner interferes with a fielder who is attempting to field a foul fly ball.” The addition of the phrase “other than the runner” clarifies the responsibility of the runner and that the runner — not the batter — will be declared out for the runner’s interference.

“Previously, it just wasn’t fair to the batter,” Hopkins explained. “If the runner interferes with the defense, it’s not the batter’s fault. It was the runner who created the infraction, so the runner will be called out.”

Baseball is the fourth-most popular sport among boys at the high school level with 478,029 participants during the 2007-08 season, according to the High School Athletics Participation Survey conducted by the NFHS. It also ranks third in school sponsorship across the nation with 15,720 participating schools.

This press release was written by Bethany Julka, a summer intern in the NFHS Publications/ Communications Department and a rising senior at Butler (Indiana) University.