

Memorandum

DATE: January, 2021
TO: CIF Coaches
CIF Umpires
COPY: Chris Fahey
Section Commissioners
FROM: Ken Allan,
California State Baseball Rules Interpreter
Former Member, NFHS Rules Committee
RE: 2021 Rule Interpretations, Points of Emphasis

The following information is provided to commissioners, coaches and umpires in an effort to provide consistency in rule enforcement and game management. Any questions should be directed to Ken Allan at: kensport101@earthlink.net. (909 861-7767)

A COPY OF THIS MEMO IS AVAILABLE ON THE CIF STATE WEBSITE: CIFSTATE.ORG GO TO SPORTS CATEGORY ON RIBBON, THEN BASEBALL THEN TO DROP DOWN MENU FOR RULES.

Please be sure your lower division coaches have a copy.

NOTE TO INSTRUCTIONAL CHAIRMEN

Please do not add to or change any information in this memo. This material has been approved by the CIF State Office and is expected to be published as is.
Thank you.

NO NEW RULES FOR 2021

There are no rules or points of emphasis changes for 2021. The National Federation is not publishing rule books or case books for 2021. Please use the rule books you have for 2020. Prior to some highlights from past memos, here is an important announcement from the CIF:

There are some states that do not allow student-athletes to compete while wearing religious headwear. Please be advised that the CIF DOES ALLOW the use of religious headwear. Instructional chairmen are asked to please remind their local unit that the CIF does not require a letter from the State or Section and that the CIF does not request the athlete to remove the headwear.

COVID-19 MODIFICATION FOR UMPIRES

- No line-up card exchanges.
- Observe social distance requirements when communicating with coaches, players and other umpires.
- Face coverings are required at all times.
- Carry hand sanitizer and use frequently.

PLEASE NOTE THAT BECAUSE OF THE ONGOING COVID-19 CRISIS, INFORMATION WILL BE UPDATED ON THE CIF STATE WEBSITE AS IT BECOMES AVAILABLE. PLEASE MONITOR THE WEBSITE FREQUENTLY. SEE THE CURRENT LIST OF COVID-19 MODIFICATIONS FOR BASEBALL AT THE CIF STATE WEBSITE: cifstate.org

ITEMS FOR REVIEW

6-1-3

Previously, 6-1-3 provided that a pitcher's entire pivot foot be parallel and in contact with the pitcher's plate. The 2020 change eliminated the requirement for the entire pivot foot to be in contact with the pitcher's plate. Please note, however, that a pitcher still cannot pitch off the end of the pitcher's plate.

1-3-1

The revised NFHS effective date for baseballs to meet the NOCSAE performance standard has arrived. (January 1, 2021)

3-1-4

Despite predictions of doom and gloom over the new DH/Pitcher rule, there were very few state-wide reports of confusion or misapplication of the rule. From the information I received, the overwhelming majority of DH/Pitcher situations were straight-forward and without complication

OFFICIALS SIGNALS

Created a signal for a 3-or 4 person crew to indicate to their partners where they are rotating to a specific base for coverage of an anticipated play. Umpires are also expected to communicate rotations in a two man crew.

Comment: This is especially important in that most high school umpires rarely work with 3 or 4 man crews. Signaling rotations to each other will help ensure all crew members are on the same page with rotations.

OFFICIALS SIGNALS

The NFHS created a signal for an umpire to alert his partner of relevant information. The number one job of an umpire is to get the call right. The days of "dying" with a call are long past. **Comment:** Rule 10-4 states that no umpire shall criticize or interfere with another umpire's decision unless asked by the one making it. The purpose of this addition is to alert a calling umpire of information he may not have to arrive at the correct call. An example would be a catcher momentarily losing possession of the ball on a tag play at the plate. The plate umpire, blocked on the play, erroneously calls the runner out. This signal alerts the calling umpire that his partner has additional information. The calling umpire should then consult with his partner. Umpires are strongly urged to use this mechanic as a means to achieve the correct call. Umpires are reminded to go to the calling umpire immediately if there may be a misapplication of a rule. (Item 1-13 Umpire Manual.)

FACE GUARDS--Face guards may now be legal due to some manufacturers producing NOCSAE approved helmets that are being tested with the face guard (like the c-flap). Please see rule book 1-5-2 (p 14) and case book play 1.5.2 (p 11). When an umpire asks coaches at the pregame meeting if their players are properly equipped, this includes NOCSE approved helmets and attachments, if applicable.

NATIONAL ANTHEM STANDOFF---This item is specifically addressed in the NFHS rule book. Not only is this considered an act of unsportsmanlike behavior, (3-3-1-f) but it is also disrespectful. Teams are expected to return to their dugouts without delay following the National Anthem. Coaches are the closest role models to these students and are held accountable for the behavior of their players as they represent their players and community. Umpires are instructed to request that the offending team immediately return to its dugout. Failure to do so will result in the head coach receiving a written warning and being restricted to the dugout for the remainder of the game. This item has the support of the CIF.

TAKING A KNEE DURING THE NATIONAL ANTHEM—Questions have been asked about what umpires should do in the event a player or players take a knee during the National Anthem. The answer is nothing. While some may claim this is unsportsmanlike, there are other issues involved such as freedom of speech, etc. To repeat, umpires are to take no action in the event of a player or players kneeling during the National Anthem.

BENCH JOCKEYING, CELEBRATIONS AND NEGATIVE COMMENTS BETWEEN OPPONENTS—The purpose of interscholastic sports is educational. Chants/intentional distractions/loud noises (natural or artificial) directed at the opponent's pitcher prior to his pitching, or the batter getting ready to hit, or a fielder getting ready to make a play, is not good sportsmanship. Unsportsmanlike behavior will not be tolerated in interscholastic baseball. Umpires and coaches need to work together for the benefit of the students they officiate and teach. Coaches and umpires must not lose sight of the fact positive values that are learned on the baseball diamond will serve the young people long after their high school careers have ended.

ENFORCEMENT OF THE NFHS JEWELRY RULE---Items that are attached except medical appliances/devices are considered to be jewelry. The cause for the restriction of jewelry is primarily for risk minimization for the wearer and opponent. Obviously, if a physician has provided documentation support of a particular piercing, the local state association has the latitude (with proper justification) to make a special accommodation for the player. Umpires are asked to be more vigilant in the enforcement of this rule.

COMPLIANCE OF PLAYER'S EQUIPMENT—A NOCSAE stamped baseball is required for the 2021 season. A reminder, that under CIF rules, a game cannot be played with baseballs that lack the NFHS Authenticating Mark. When a coach is asked to verify that his players are properly equipped in accordance with NFHS rules, the coach shall also verify that the participants are using only legal equipment, including bats that are unaltered from the manufacture's original design.

REMINDERS WHICH ARE HELPFUL TO COACHES AND UMPIRES IN GAME ADMINISTRATION

These items have appeared in the past and are repeated as an aid to proper game management and pace of play.

FOUL BALLS—We are getting better at this. In order to keep games moving more smoothly, it is strongly recommended that any ball retrieved by the on-deck hitter, or a long foul ball on the visitor's side of the field, be rolled to the home dugout as soon as possible. If you are the visiting team and your on-deck batter retrieves a ball at the backstop, please have him roll it to the home dugout rather than taking it with him back to the on-deck circle. Doing this will allow the umpires to replenish baseballs from one source. This is even more critical in high school games in that the home team is only required to provide three baseballs. Let's continue to give this a good effort as it is a big help in keeping the game moving.

LINEUP CARDS —If you are using a designated hitter, please list the DH either directly below or directly across from the player for whom he is hitting. Please do not list the DH at the bottom of the lineup card, unless of course, he is batting for the player ninth in the order.

LEAVING THE DUGOUT DURING A LIVE BALL—Coaches are doing a much better job in helping umpires enforce this rule. Players who leave the dugout to congratulate a scoring runner during a live ball will receive a team warning. Any following violators are subject to ejection. Coaches are also asked to remain in the dugout as provided by rule. Coaches may leave a dugout to position defensive players, but must return immediately to the confines of the dugout. (See POE above.)

UMPIRE AUTHORITY AND ENFORCEMENT—The NFHS, again, wants to emphasize the importance of cooperation between coaches and umpires. Contrary to the opinion of some, umpires are not the enemy. The sole purpose of umpires is to administer the game and keep the game under control. To help achieve that end, coaches need to cooperate with umpires and comply with umpire requests. It is understandable that coaches will sometimes have issues with various developments during the game. However, coaches and umpires are expected to act in a professional manner. Once a coach has received an explanation of his question, the coach needs to return to the coaching box or dugout in a timely manner. Coaches who fail to comply with an umpire's request, such as remaining outside the dugout during a live ball, exaggerating the time for offensive and/or defensive conferences, gamesmanship and challenging the umpire's authority, cannot be tolerated in education-based athletics. Coaches must understand they are setting the sportsmanship example for their team. Everyone benefits when it is a positive example. By the same token, umpires are also expected to act in a professional manner and are expected to be a calming influence in heated situations. If a coach believes an umpire has acted unprofessionally, he should forward that information to the area liaison.

COACHING ATTIRE—Umpires are expected to enforce this rule. This is usually an issue in lower level games. As per rule 3-2-1, coaches must be in the uniform of their team. As a guideline, the following is acceptable: Baseball shoes, baseball pants, a jersey top similar to what the team is wearing, either a tee shirt with a team logo, wind shirt with a team logo, a jacket and a baseball cap. The following is NOT acceptable at ANY level: Coaches who are wearing shorts, or other non-baseball attire such as, but not limited to, sweatpants, jeans, tennis shoes or sandals. These items are not permissible. The penalty for non-compliance is that the coach is restricted to the dugout. If the team's only coach is in non-compliance, he will be allowed on the field to participate in the pre-game meeting at home plate. He will also be allowed on the field to attend to an injured player. Otherwise, he must remain in the dugout.

THANKS—To all the coaches and umpires for their past cooperation and good luck for 2021.