



2025 NFHS BASEBALL RULES INTERPRETATIONS

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SITUATION 1: The batter is in the batter's box with a non-wood bat that has pine tar 19 inches from the base of the knob. **RULING:** This is an illegal bat. Resin, pine tar or any other drying agent are not permitted to exceed 18 inches on the bat from the base of the knob. The batter is declared out and the coach is restricted to the bench if it is the first team offense. If it is a subsequent offense, then the head coach (or the designated head coach) is ejected. (1-3-2c-1, 1-3-5, 7-4-1a, 4-1-3b PENALTY)

SITUATION 2: As the batter steps into the batter's box, the catcher calls the plate umpire's attention to the batter's non-wood bat. Pine tar has been applied to the bat and is both on the grip and off the grip, but below 18 inches from the base of the knob. **RULING:** This is a legal bat. Resin, pine tar and other drying agents are allowed on the grip and on the bat itself provided it does not exceed 18 inches from the base of the knob. (1-3-2c-1)

SITUATION 3: The umpire notices in the first inning that B1's bat has pine tar extending beyond 18 inches from the knob of the bat (a) before B1 steps into the batter's box or (b) after B1 hits a ground foul ball. **RULING:** In (a), B1 may obtain a legal bat without penalty. In (b), B1 is declared out for using an illegal bat and the head coach is restricted to the bench if it is the first offense. If it is a subsequent offense, the head coach (or designated head coach) is ejected. (1-3-2c-1, 1-3-5, 7-4-1a, 4-1-3b PENALTY)

SITUATION 4: A team wants to put a slogan above the number on the back of the team jersey. **RULING:** This is not permissible. Jerseys – including the player number – may have the player's

name, school name or school mascot name but nothing else. (1-4-3, 1-4-4)

SITUATION 5: A team has players in a uniform that has pants that do not extend below the knee. **RULING:** This is not allowed. Team uniform pants are to extend below the knee. Pants that end at the knee or above, including shorts, are not legal. (1-4-4)

SITUATION 6: The player number on the back of the team jersey is depicted by the number being the jersey itself, bordered by material sewn on of a different color or by a border on the jersey of a different color. **RULING:** This is not a legal team jersey. The player number on the back of the shirt is to be of solid color contrasting with the color of the shirt. (1-4-3)

SITUATION 7: At the time of the pitch all fielders, except the catcher, are to be in fair territory. What does it mean to be in fair territory? **RULING:** By Rule 1-1-4, a fielder is in fair ground when at least one foot is touching fair ground. So, to be in fair ground at the time of the pitch, either both feet must be in fair territory, or one foot can touch foul ground and the other foot be entirely in fair territory; no part touching foul ground. The foot in fair territory can be entirely on the foul line as that line is fair ground. (1-1-4)

SITUATION 8: The second baseman goes onto the field on defense wearing a jacket on (a) the outside of his jersey, or (b) the inside of his jersey. **RULING:** This is illegal in (a) and legal in (b). Only the pitcher may wear a jacket on the outside of the jersey, and only after reaching base on offense. (1-4-4)

SITUATION 9: With the bases loaded and one out, B5 hits a high, fly ball to the shortstop. The base umpire properly declares "infield fly," but the shortstop fumbles the catch unintentionally and does not make the catch. Although the batter is out on the infield fly, R1, R2 and R3 attempt to advance. The shortstop picks up the ball and throws home to the catcher who is in contact with home plate. R3 veers off before touching home plate and enters the offense's dugout. **RULING:** B5 is out on the infield fly. R3 is declared out when R3 left the baseline and headed toward the offense's dugout for abandoning an effort to advance to the next base. (2-19, 8-4-1,; 8-4-2p Note)

SITUATION 10: The third baseman has one foot in dead-ball territory completely, and the other foot on the dead-ball line when he catches a foul ball. **RULING:** This is a catch and the ball stays in play unless the third baseman steps into dead-ball territory with both feet. (2-9-1, 5-1-1i)

SITUATION 11: The first baseman, near a dead-ball area, leaps into the air from live-ball ground, catches the ball while in the air, and lands with both feet in dead-ball territory. **RULING:** This is a catch, and the batter-runner is out as the first baseman was in live-ball ground when he jumped in the air to make the catch. The ball is dead following the catch and any runners on base are awarded one base. (2-9-1, 5-1-1i, 8-3-3d)

SITUATION 12: The left fielder, tracking the high fly ball, goes into dead-ball territory with both feet. The left fielder leaps from dead-ball ground, catches the ball while in the air, and lands with both feet in live-ball territory. **RULING:**

This is not a catch as the left fielder has not re-established himself in live ball territory before making the catch. The ball is dead, runners return and the batter goes back to bat with a strike added to the count. (2-9-1; 5-1-1i)

SITUATION 13: At the pregame conference, the home coach points to the field tarp sitting against a fence in foul ground and states that the tarp is dead-ball ground. F5 brushes against the tarp while catching a foul ball. **RULING:** This is a catch and the batter-runner is out. The ball stays in play as falling into dead-ball ground does not include merely running against or brushing such object. (2-9-1)

SITUATION 14: Bottom of the sixth inning and the coach brings in the starting left fielder, No. 12, to pitch. In the top of the seventh, the coach pinch hits for No. 12 and then, in the bottom of the seventh, wants to re-enter No. 12 in the game to pitch again. The opposing coach argues that, while No. 12 may re-enter defensively, No. 12 cannot re-enter as a pitcher since No. 12 was not the starter. **RULING:** No. 12 being a starter, may re-enter the game and No. 12 may do so as a pitcher. No. 12 was not replaced while No. 12's team was on defense nor due to excessive charged conferences. (3-1-2, 3-1-3)

SITUATION 15: With a runner on first base, the pitcher pivots to throw to first base and loses grip on the ball. As a result, the pitcher spikes the ball toward the ground which rolls between first and second base. The defensive coach argues it should be a "do-over" and not a balk. **RULING:** This is a balk. The defense needed to complete the play attempt with a throw that sends the ball in the direction of first base. A slip (as opposed to a pitch or throw) is a released baseball, intended to be a pitch or a throw, but lacks both aim and momentum. An intended pick-off throw to first that slips is a balk if it doesn't reach the foul line or a fielder within reach of a tag attempt at the base. (6-1-4; 6-2-4a)

SITUATION 16: With the bases empty, B1 swings and misses strike three which

rebounds uncaught off the catcher. The catcher secures the baseball and throws to first from a small distance in front of home plate. B1, in the last 30 feet to first base, is running out of the running lane on (a) the foul side of the running lane, or (b) the fair side of the running lane. **RULING:** In (a), this is no violation of the running lane rule and the play will be how it plays out. In (b), this is a violation of the running lane rule and B1 will be declared out for interference at the moment the catcher throws to first base. (8-4-1g)

SITUATION 17: The catcher is attempting to throw out B2 on a grounded bunt that went just a few feet into fair ground. B2 is running in fair ground and is 30 feet from first base and outside the running lane. The catcher (a) makes a throw to first base but it sails high over the first baseman's head, or (b) hesitates and does not throw to first. **RULING:** In (a), as soon as the catcher made a throw to first base, interference is called and B2 is declared out. The quality of the throw is not important. In (b), no interference can be called, even though B2 is running out of the running lane, since a throw was not made to first base. (8-4-1g)

SITUATION 18: With R3 on third and R2 on second and one out, B4 hits a small ground ball which dies in front of home plate. R3, getting a good jump on the pitch, slides and touches home plate just as the catcher is picking up the baseball. R2 has not yet touched third when the catcher throws to first base, beating B4 to first. B4, while running to first, is out of the running lane as B4 nears first base. **RULING:** This is running-lane interference by B4. When the catcher makes the throw to first, interference is declared at the moment the throw is made, and B4 is out. Since the interference is at the time of the throw, R3's score counts as he had touched home before the throw. R2 is returned to second base. **COMMENT:** The running-lane rule exists for several reasons. One, to keep the offense from making it difficult, if not impossible, for a throw to first from somewhere behind the runner, to be made; thus, providing

the offense an unearned hit. The second reason, and a very important one, is safety. Coaches will soon learn that if interference is not called when the throw is made, and the call is delayed until the outcome of the play at first is known, then coaches will instruct catchers to throw and hit the batter-runner to ensure the call is made and that other runners do not get to advance during the play. Throwing at runners is a tactic not to be employed in the high school game. (8-4-1g)

SITUATION 19: With R1 on first base, B2 hits a ground ball between the mound and first-base foul line. As R1 advances, R1 is halfway to second base when R1 veers into the infield grass and blocks the first baseman on the ability to throw to second base. The first baseman does throw, hitting R1, and the ball ricochets into the outfield, allowing R1 to advance to third and B2 to get to first safely. **RULING:** This is interference by R1 on the throw from the first baseman. (It is not force play slide interference as R1 was still far from second base in a position where R1 could not be expected to slide). R1 is out for interference, and if the umpires judge the defense could have made a double play, B2 is out as well. If the out on B2 was not possible, then B2 is at first base. (8-4-2g)

SITUATION 20: With R1 on first and R2 on second and no outs, B3 has a 2-2 count. The pitcher assumes the wind-up position and both runners take off for third base and second base, respectively. At the moment the pitcher makes their first move to the plate, R1 is standing on second base, but R2 has not yet reached third base. The pitch is a curveball in the dirt that B3 swings at and misses. B3 takes off for first and is called safe by U1. The defensive coach argues that R1 still occupied first base and thus B3 should be out. **RULING:** B3 is out. Since R2 has not yet acquired third base at the time of the pitch, R1 cannot legally acquire second base. Therefore, for this play, first base was still occupied by R1. R2 stays at third and R1 stays at second, but B3 is out. (2-24-1, 8-2-8, 7-4-1b, 8-1-1b)