



April 15, 2024

NFHS Softball Weekly Rule Interpretations

Situation 1: Team A is utilizing the DP/FLEX with the DP, #13, batting in the 9th spot in the lineup and the FLEX #7 listed 10th in the lineup. In the third inning, the DP gets on base and the coach requests time and reports to the umpire that the FLEX is going to run for the DP. In the sixth inning with the 9th spot in the lineup do up to bat, the coach informs the plate umpire that #3, an eligible sub, is going to bat in the 9th spot in the lineup. The umpire asks the coach which position they would like #3 to enter, in the DP position or the FLEX's position who is currently playing offense for the DP. The coach informs the plate umpire that they would like the FLEX #7 to continue to play defense so #3 is entering into the DP's position in the lineup and the FLEX is going back to playing defense only. **RULING:** Correct procedure by the umpire. When the FLEX is playing offense in the DP's position in the lineup and a substitute is being entered to play offense in that spot in the lineup, there needs to be clarity on which position the substitute is actually entering. They could enter the DP's position in the lineup, and the FLEX would return to playing defense only and that player has never left the game, which was the desired outcome in this case. Another option is the substitute could enter in the FLEX's position and play offense in the DP's spot as #7 had previously done, in this case #7 would have left the game and still had one reentry. Confirming that the umpire understands the coach's substitution and correctly records it is essential to ensuring the lineup is accurate for future possible changes. (3-3-6d [2a], 3-3-6f)

Situation 2: With one out and R1 on third base, R2 on second base and R3 on first base, B5 hits a pop up that, in the umpires judgement, can be caught with ordinary effort by F3. The plate umpire declares "Infield fly if fair the batter is out" All runners were off with the hit and R1 continues to run toward home, but R2 and R3 retreat toward their bases. As R3 is returning to first base F3 sees R3 retreating and stops their movement to make the initial play on the batted ball to avoid contact with R3. As the ball is falling, it hits R3 who is in front of F3 and then falls to the ground. The umpire rules the ball is dead and R3 is out for interference. R1 has touched home prior to the umpire ruling interference on R3. The umpire also rules that since the ball was interfered with in fair territory that the ball is fair and B5 is also out due to the infield fly rule. R1's run does not score since the third out of the inning was made by the batter-runner prior to touching first base. **RULING:** Correct ruling. A batter-runner is not out due to an infield fly until the balls status has been determined to be fair. In this case, that determination is made when the interference occurred while the ball was over fair territory. In this case there are two possible calls on R3, first the umpire could have judged that F3 stopping their movement to make the initial play on the batted ball to avoid R3 was interference or when R3 was struck with an untouched batted ball while not in contact with a base and before it passed an infielder. Either of these situations are forms of interference which is a dead ball and R3 would be the second out of the inning. Lastly, since the balls status is fair due to the interference in fair territory the batter-runner is out due to the infield fly rule being in effect. Since the third out was a result of the batter-runner being putout prior to obtaining first base no run can score on the play. (2-19-1g, 2-29, 8-1-1a, 8-2-9, 8-6-10a, 8-6-11, 9-1-1 Exception a)

Situation 3: Team A is utilizing the DP/FLEX lineup option. During the 3rd inning, Team B notices that the FLEX is batting in the DP's position in the lineup and questions the umpire. Team A's coach informs the umpire that they forgot to report the FLEX batting for the DP. Team B's coach insists this is an illegal substitution. The umpire rules that this is an unreported substitute and warns Team A's coach informing them if there is a second violation that the next offender and the head coach will be restricted to the dugout/bench for the remainder of the game. **RULING:** Correct ruling. It is legal for the FLEX to bat for the DP but this change is considered a substitution and must be reported as the DP has left the game since they are no longer playing offense. Since the FLEX had the legal right to occupy this position in the lineup but were simply not reported this is considered an unreported substitute. (2-57-1, 2-57-2, 3-3-6d, 3-6-7)