



March 18, 2024

NFHS Softball Weekly Rule Interpretations

Situation 1: With no runners on base, B1 hits a ball straight back toward the pitcher who attempts to field the ball still within the pitching circle. As the ball deflects off F1's glove it continues toward the first base line with F1 following the ball attempting to gain control of it. As F1 nears the foul line and is reaching for the ball that is still in front of them, there is contact with B1 who is running toward first base. In a) B1 is near the foul line but completely in fair territory and in b) B1 is within the three-foot lane. In both cases, the umpire rules a dead ball and B1 out for interfering with F1 making the initial play on a batted ball. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. In both cases, F1 is no longer considered to be making an initial play on the batted ball since they are more than a step and a reach from the spot of initial contact. Since F1 was not considered to be making the initial play on a batted ball and was not in possession of the ball they are guilty of obstructing B1. The three-foot lane does not factor into this play at all. This rule pertains to the batter-runner interfering with the fielder taking the throw at first base; it does not limit the runner's location during this type of situation it only applies when there is a throw to first base. (2-46-3c; 8-2-6)

Situation 2: With R1 on second base, B2 hits a base hit toward the center fielder. As F6 moves toward second base to be the cutoff, they obstruct R1 on their way to third base. The umpire signals and verbalizes obstruction. Seeing the obstruction call, the third base coach sends R1 home where they are thrown out by ten feet. R1 is ruled out and B2 is safe at second base at the end of the play. After the play, the offensive coach objects stating that their runner should have been protected by the obstruction and awarded home or worst case returned to third base. The plate umpire informs the coach that in their judgement the runner would have only obtained third base and once they passed the base they would have reached had there been no obstruction, the obstructed runner is no longer protected and remains out. **RULING:** Correct ruling by the umpire. Obstructed runners cannot be called out between the two bases where they were obstructed (unless they violate the exceptions listed), in this play that was between second and third. When obstruction occurs, the umpire must judge what base that runner would have obtained had there been no obstruction, in this play the umpire judged third was that base. Once an obstructed runner is no longer between the two bases where they were obstructed and has passed the base they would have reached had there been no obstruction that runner is again liable to be put out. Had the runner been tagged out between second and third they would have been awarded third base (base the umpire judged they would have reached had there been no obstruction) however, since they passed the base they would have reached, they are no longer protected and the runner is called out. (8-4-3b Penalty 1 & 2)

Situation 3: With R1 on third base, B2 is in the right hand batter's box and loads their weight on their back foot as they take a pitch for a ball. Following the pitch B1 equalizes their weight on both feet without moving their feet in the batter's box. F2, attempting a pick off at third base throws the ball hitting the batter near the center of their body. The umpire rules that since B2 shifted their weight they made a movement within the batter's box and by rule are guilty of interference. They rule B2 out and return R1 to third base. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling as described by the umpire. In order for there to be

interference by the batter in this situation, the batter's movement must hinder the catcher's attempt to play on the runner. If the umpire judged that the movement of the batter resulted in them hindering F2's attempt to play on R1 then this would be interference and B2 is ruled out. However, "any movement" does not equal interference, any movement that hinders F1's attempt to play on a runner does. As with all interference rulings, there is umpire judgement involved in the proper application of the rule and the final ruling on the field. If the umpire judges that the batter's movement hindered the catcher's attempt to make a play on a runner then these actions would result in an interference call. If the umpire judges that the batter's movement did not hinder the catcher's attempt to make a play on a runner then the batter would not be guilty of interference. (7-4-4c [2])