



May 1, 2023

## NFHS Softball Weekly Rule Interpretations

NO.	PLAYER	RE	POS.
19	1 B. HARRIS		6
	SUB.		
17	2 S. ABLE		4
	SUB.		
20	3 C. THOMAS		8
	SUB.		
24	4 D. JONES		DP
	SUB.		
15	5 R. ALEXANDER		3
	SUB.		
22	6 B. MOORE		2
	SUB.		
25	7 A. COOPER		7
	SUB.		
7	8 K. MORRIS		5
	SUB.		
3	9 E. RODGERS		1
	SUB.		
18	10 M. GREEN (FLEX)		9
	SUB.		
NO.	SUBSTITUTES		POS.
10	S. HOWELL		
4	B. BAKER		
6	C. SMITH		
55	D. BROWN		

The lineup shown here is a legal starting lineup utilizing the DP/FLEX option (3-3-6). In order for a lineup to be complete each starting player must have their first initial and last name, jersey number, position and batting order (3-1-3). As can be seen here each starting player has a defensive position listed in the lineup, with the exception of spot #4 in the lineup whose starting position is DP. Since the DP is designed to start the game playing offense only their starting position is listed as DP and they are required to be listed in the top 9 positions in the lineup(3-3-6a). Also of note is that the FLEX, which is listed 10<sup>th</sup> in the lineup(3-3-6b), is a defensive specialist and is required to have a defensive position listed in the starting lineup. Once the plate umpire accepts this lineup as an official lineup, a coach may make changes prior to a pitch being thrown.

**Example 1:** After the lineup is made official, the coach may say, "Blue, my DP is going to pitch and #3 is going to play offense only" (3-3-6e). The umpire should mark this change on the lineup card to ensure the correct player is eligible for a courtesy runner later in the game. Also it should be noted that #3 has NOT left the game as they will continue to bat in the 9<sup>th</sup> position in the lineup.

**Example 2:** After the lineup is made official the coach may say "Blue I want my DP to play defense for the FLEX" (3-3-6e). The umpire should mark the FLEX player (#18) as having left the game and would have one reentry.

**Example 3:** After the lineup is made official, the coach may say "Blue I want my FLEX to bat for my DP" (3-3-6d). The DP has left the game in this situation and the umpire should mark #24 as having left the game and they would have one reentry.

The following situations are from three different games and are to be considered independently:

**Situation 1:** Team A (the visiting team) is using the starting lineup shown above. After the lineup is official Team A's coach informs the umpire that their FLEX will be batting for their DP. The umpire notes the starting DP (#24) has left the game and has one reentry. In the top of the first inning, the FLEX gets a hit and is safely on first base. Team A's coach tells the umpire that the DP, #24 will reenter to run for the FLEX and the FLEX (#18) will go back to playing defense only. In the bottom of the second inning, B4's position in the lineup comes up to bat and the coach informs the umpire that the FLEX will again bat for the DP. The umpire marks that #24 has left the game for a second time and has no remaining eligibility for the game. After hitting the ball and reaching first base, Team A's coach tells the plate umpire that #10 is entering the DP position and the FLEX will return to playing defense only. In the third inning when B4's spot in the lineup is reached, Team A's coach tells the umpire they want the FLEX to bat for the DP. The umpire should mark that #10 has now left the game and has one reentry. After reaching first base safely, the coach of Team A tells the umpire #10 is going to reenter as the DP and the FLEX is going back to playing defense only. In the fourth inning when B4's time at bat is approaching, the coach of Team A tells the umpire that the FLEX will bat for the DP. The umpire marks that #10 has left the game for a second time and has no remaining eligibility for the game. After the FLEX hits and gets on base safely Team A's coach tells the umpire that #4 will enter the DP position in the lineup and run for the FLEX and the FLEX will return to playing defense only. The umpire allows all these actions as legal utilization of the DP/FLEX rule. **RULING:** Correct ruling. If the FLEX bats they must do so in the DP's position (3-3-6d&g). When the DP no longer plays offense, they have left the game (3-3-6d). If the DP reenters to play offense the FLEX may return to the 10<sup>th</sup> position in the lineup playing defense only and is not considered to have left the game (3-3-6d [2a]). The DP position may be filled by a legal eligible substitute (3-3-6d). One important concept of DP/FLEX is to separate the player from the position. As is commonly known all players have only one reentry, so once the starting DP, #24 and the second DP #10 left the game a second time they were no longer able to participate in the game (3-3-5). However, the DP position is available for an eligible sub to occupy for the entire game, allowing #4 to enter the vacant DP position. Another important concept is the FLEX is the defensive specialist, as long as they continue to play defense they have never left the game. In all of these movements, the FLEX played offense until they were on base then returned to the 10<sup>th</sup> position in the lineup up playing defense only. In all of the movements in this situation, the FLEX player never left the game since they continued to play defense. Team A could continue to have the FLEX player bat every time that B4's position in the lineup is reached and have the DP run for the FLEX with the FLEX returning to play defense only as many times as they have eligible players to enter the DP position in the lineup.

**Situation 2:** Team A is utilizing the starting lineup shown above. In the third inning, the coach tells the umpire "#24 is going to play second base and #17 is going to be my new DP". The umpire informs the coach that it is legal for the DP to play defense at second base, but the DP position will remain in the 4<sup>th</sup> spot in the lineup. #17 will continue to bat 2<sup>nd</sup> in the lineup and will not leave the game. **RULING:** Correct ruling. The DP may play defense for any player other than the FLEX and that player continues to bat but will not play defense and is not considered to have left the game (3-3-6e). As stated in rule 3-3-6c the DP must remain in the same position in the batting order for the entire game. This is critical for the situation where the FLEX might bat, as they have to do so in the DP's position and in this game that is the 4<sup>th</sup> position in the lineup (3-3-6d&g). There is no need to create a "position" for #17 that is playing offense only, a position is only required for the starting lineup, if the DP is playing defense for them they are still batting 2<sup>nd</sup> in the lineup and no other position or designation is required.

**Situation 3:** Team A is utilizing the starting lineup shown above. In the fourth inning, the DP #24 goes out to play defense in left field. Team B's coach approaches the umpire about #24 being an unreported substitute. The umpire agrees and gives Team A's coach a team warning for not reporting this substitution. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. Since this is a defensive only change and #25 will continue to bat, no player has left the game. This is not considered a substitution as defined in rules 2-57-1 and 3-3-2. It is recommended that a coach inform the umpire when the DP is playing defense for any player to help avoid this perception of an unreported substitute however, it is not required. In this case, the correct ruling is that this is a defensive only change and Team A should not receive any warnings.