

NFHS 2020 Baseball Rules Changes

3-1-4: Designated Hitter (DH) can be used in two ways. The DH can be listed as the tenth starter replacing one of the other nine players when it is their turn to bat. The other method is that any one of the starting defensive players can be their own DH (in effect having two positions) within the confines of the rule requirements.

Rationale: This rule change assists coaches with an alternative to keep their better players in the game to contribute to the offensive output of the team and give another player a chance to participate on defense. In addition, considering the pitch count rules, this change would help pitchers to keep their bat in the game, but can come out of the game defensively to protect their arms from overuse.

NFHS DH RULE 2020

**Player may be listed as both the fielder and the DH.
Player may be substituted for defensively and still be the DH.
Once the DH is substituted for on offense, the role of DH is
terminated for the game
and only one player may occupy that spot in the batting order.
If the pitcher or catcher are listed as P/DH or C/DH they are NOT
allowed courtesy runners.*
The player listed in the starting lineup as Fielder/DH may come out
of the game in either role and re-enter once.**

***NOTE: CR is by state adoption**

2020 BASEBALL EDITORIAL CHANGES

1-3-2b1, 3-1-1, 4-1-3b, 4-2-4, 5-1-1f5, 7-4-1, 8-3-3c
Dead Ball and Delayed Dead Ball Table, Baserunning Awards Table and Rules
by State Association Adoption

2020 BASEBALL POINTS OF EMPHASIS

1. Game Ending Procedures
2. Player/Designated Hitter
3. Proper Pitching Positions
4. Force Play Slide Rule
5. Enforcement of NFHS Jewelry Rule
6. Compliance of Player's Equipment

2020 NFHS Baseball Rules Interpretations

SITUATION 1: The home team coach is using Jones as the player/DH. In the second inning, Jones comes to bat and hits a clean double. With Jones on second base, the coach goes to the plate umpire and requests that a courtesy runner run for Jones. **RULING:** A courtesy runner for Jones is not allowed. When his team is on defense, Jones is a pitcher; when Jones is at bat he is batting as a designated hitter, not as a pitcher. A courtesy runner is not allowed for a DH. (3-1-4b; Suggested Speed-Up Rules – Courtesy Runners 1)

SITUATION 2: Jones is listed as a player/ DH and comes to bat in the third inning. Jones hits a double and, while sliding into second base, sprains his ankle and cannot continue. The coach puts Williams in to run for Jones. **RULING:** This is legal. The impact of Williams running for Jones is that the role of the DH is now ended for the game. Since Jones is no longer the DH, and he and Williams cannot occupy a spot in the lineup at the same time, Jones is considered to have been removed from the game for his first time. (3-1-3, 3-1- 4b)

SITUATION 3: Jones is listed as the player/DH. Having pitched in the first two innings, he comes to bat in the third inning and hits a double. With Jones on second base, the coach tells the umpire that he wants to end the role of DH for Jones. He is ending the use of a DH for the game, making Jones only eligible to be the pitcher. The coach now wants to have a courtesy runner run for Jones. **RULING:** This is legal. The coach may end the role of the DH, leaving the previous player/DH as only a defensive player. As Jones was the pitcher of record, having pitched in the last half-inning, he is eligible for a legal courtesy runner. (3-1-4b, Suggested Speed-Up Rules – Courtesy Runners 1)

SITUATION 4: Jones, as the player/ DH, grows tired in the fifth inning and is replaced as the pitcher by Coleman. Jones remains the DH. In the sixth inning, Jones is hit by a pitch in the helmet and the medical staff will not allow him to continue in the game. The coach a) puts Smith in to run for Jones at first base or B) has Coleman run for Jones. **RULING:** Both are legal actions. In (a), the role of the DH will be ended for the game as Smith is an offensive substitute for Jones. Additionally, Coleman will be out of the game since Smith now occupies that spot in the batting order. In (b), the role of the DH is also ended. Coleman does remain in the game as the pitcher and will hit for himself in later at-bats. (3-1-3, 3-1-4b)

SITUATION 5: Brady is the pitcher/ DH and tires in the second inning. The coach brings in Kelly to pitch in the second inning. In the fourth inning,

Evans replaces Kelly as the pitcher. In the fifth inning, Brown replaces Evans as the pitcher. In the seventh inning, Brady returns to play first base. **RULING:** These substitutions are all legal, with Brady remaining the DH in each instance. Brown will be out of the game when Brady returns. The pitcher/DH is not locked into a defensive position and may be moved defensively while being locked in the batting order. (3-1- 4b)

SITUATION 6: Smith is listed as the second baseman/DH in the lineup. In the sixth inning, the coach wants Smith to play right field while remaining the DH. **RULING:** This is a legal defensive change. The player/DH may move positions defensively while remaining the DH. Smith would now be RF/DH. (3-1-4b)

SITUATION 7: Does a player/DH have a re-entry as the defensive player and also a re-entry as the DH? **RULING:** No, any of the starting players may be removed from the game and re-entered once. The player may not be removed as a defensive player and removed later as the DH and re-enter twice in both capacities. He has one re-entry. (3-1-3)

SITUATION 8: The visiting team coach has a lineup utilizing the standard DH option; 10 starters, one being the DH for a defensive player. In the third inning, the coach realizes he wanted to use the player/DH option and not the standard DH. He asks the home plate umpire if he may change the options since the DH has yet to bat. **RULING:** No, he may not change his lineup card. Once a coach has had his lineup accepted by the plate umpire, he may not change from one DH option to the other. (3-1-4)

SITUATION 9: The home team is using the player/DH option while the visiting team is using the standard DH option with 10 starters. At the pregame conference the home team coach insists that the visiting team must use the same DH option that he is using. **RULING:** The use of a DH is not mandatory and each team may decide independently if it will play the game with a straight nine lineup, use the standard DH option or use the player/DH option. Teams do not have to use the same method. (3-1-4)

SITUATION 10: The home team is using Jones as the player/DH option. In the fifth inning, with the DH going 0-3 at bat, the coach wishes to use a pinch-hitter for Jones. He tells the plate umpire that Smith will bat for the DH with Jones returning as DH later in the game. **RULING:** The coach may use a pinch-hitter for player/DH, but when he does the role of the DH has ended for the game. Jones may return later, but when he does it will be as a defensive player who will bat for himself. [3- 1-4b(2)]

SITUATION 11: Kelly is the LF/ DH. In the third inning, Jones substitutes for Kelly as the left fielder. In the fourth inning Kelly returns as the left fielder. In the fifth inning, Armstrong substitutes for Kelly in left field. May Kelly remain as the DH? **RULING:** No. Kelly, having been removed from the game twice, is no longer eligible to play in any capacity. The role of the DH has ended since Armstrong now must bat for himself. (3-1-4b)

SITUATION 12: At the plate conference, the home team head coach provides to the plate umpire three baseballs. The plate umpire notices that while the baseballs have the NFHS Authenticating Mark, they do not have the SEI/NOCSAE mark. **RULING:** The game shall be played, but the home plate umpire shall provide a report to the state association. The baseballs are required to have both marks to ensure that proper testing has been done on the baseballs. SEI/NOCSAE testing provides a means to maintain a consistent and uniform standard for high school competition and to ensure that every baseball manufactured meets the same level of quality and playability.

SITUATION 13: The coach knows that his catcher is wearing a body protector under his jersey that is certified by NOCSAE and has the NOCSAE mark. At the plate conference, the coach affirms that all his players are properly equipped in accordance with NFHS rules. In the first inning, the plate umpire notices that the catcher is not wearing a chest protector with the NOCSAE mark. **RULING:** The plate umpire shall accept the coach's verification that all his players are equipped in accordance with the NFHS rules. (1-5-3, 4-1-3b)

SITUATION 14: Although the coach at the pregame conference verified to the plate umpire that all his players were properly equipped in accordance with NFHS rules, he notices that the catcher is wearing an old chest protector – one that does not have the NOCSAE mark on it. He asks the catcher to take his jersey off to show that he is wearing a NOCSAE-approved body protector. **RULING:** The umpire shall accept the coach's verification that all his players are properly equipped. The plate umpire shall not require the catcher to disrobe or unbutton his jersey to prove that he is wearing a certified body protector. (1-5-3, 4-1-3b)

SITUATION 15: At the pregame conference, the visiting coach verifies that all his players are properly equipped in accordance with NFHS rules. The catcher is wearing an old chest protector that does not have the SEI/NOCSAE mark. In the third inning, the catcher tells the umpire that he forgot his body protector and is not wearing anything under his jersey other than a plain undershirt. **RULING:** The plate umpire is to accept a coach's verification; however, once it is known that the verification was not totally

accurate, the umpire must halt the game and have the situation rectified. The umpire will stop the game and ask the coach if there is a body/chest protector available that the catcher may use. The game cannot resume until the catcher is legally equipped. (1-5-3, 1-5-6)

SITUATION 16: The pitcher, in his delivery, pushes completely off the pitcher's plate and while in the air and in front of the pitcher's plate, throws the pitch. **RULING:** This is an illegal pitch. A pitcher who leaps from the pitching plate (rather than pushing away from it) is no longer in contact with the pitcher's plate and has delivered an illegal pitch. (6-1-1, 6-1-2, 6-1-3)

SITUATION 17: The bases are loaded with two outs. The batter hits the pitch over the fence for a grand slam home run. While circling the bases the batter-runner passes R1 between third base and home, before R1 touches home plate. R2 and R3 had touched home plate before the batter-runner passed R1. How many runs score? **RULING:** The batter-runner is out for the third out the moment he passed a preceding runner, R1. This is a timing play and runs scored before the third out will count, but the batter-runner and R1 will not score. Score two runs. (8-4-2m, 9-1-1)

SITUATION 18: With two outs, R2 is off on the pitch from second base on an attempted steal of third base. The batter hits a ground ball to the shortstop. Just before the shortstop's throw arrives at third base to put out the batter-runner, R2 is obstructed as he rounds third base. His coach says R2 should be awarded home and have his run count since the obstruction occurred before the out at first. **RULING:** R2 will not be awarded home base on the obstruction. No run may score if the third out is made by the batter-runner before he touches first base. (9-1-1 EXCEPTION a)

SITUATION 19: Unnoticed by either team and the home plate umpire, the visiting team turns in a lineup card with eight players listed as starters and three substitute players. The visiting team had nine players on defense in the bottom of the first inning. In the top of the second inning, the home team realizes that its opponent has only eight players listed in the starting lineup. Bringing this to the attention of the home plate umpire, the home team suggests that for the remainder of the game an out should be called every time the missing spot comes to bat. The visiting team, now aware of its omission, adds to the lineup a player as the ninth defensive player. He was not one of the three substitutes listed on the lineup. **RULING:** This is legal. The team did start the team with nine players. The team is allowed to correct the omission and it is legal for a team to use a player not originally listed on the lineup card. (1-1-2, 4-4-1f)

SITUATION 20: An assistant coach has a phone app that allows him to capture the signs from the opposing team's third-base coach. This app then predicts if the sign was a steal, bunt or hit sign. Is this sign stealing phone app legal? **RULING:** This is not legal. When an umpire knows that a team is using the app, the coach should be warned and discontinue the use of the app. A second violation would restrict the coach to the bench. [3-3-1f(4), 3-3-1 PENALTY]