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2026 NFHS Baseball Rules PowerPoint

Rules Changes
Editorial Changes
Mechanical Changes
Points of Emphasis

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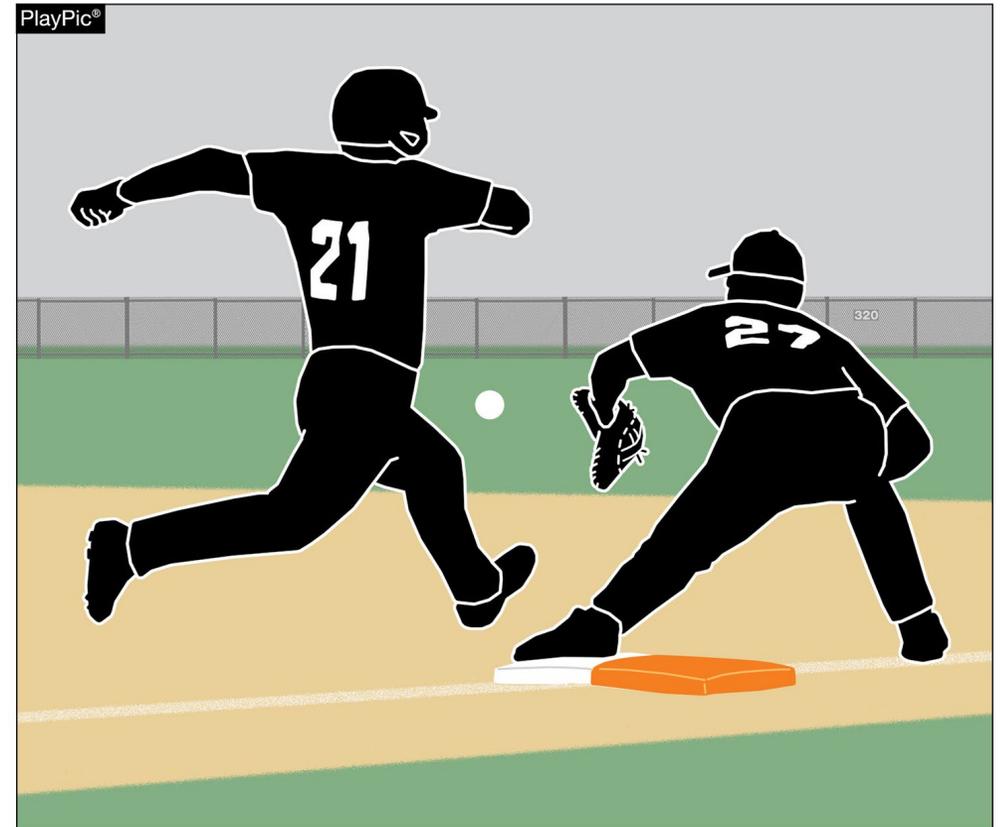


2026 NFHS Baseball Rules Changes

DOUBLE FIRST BASE

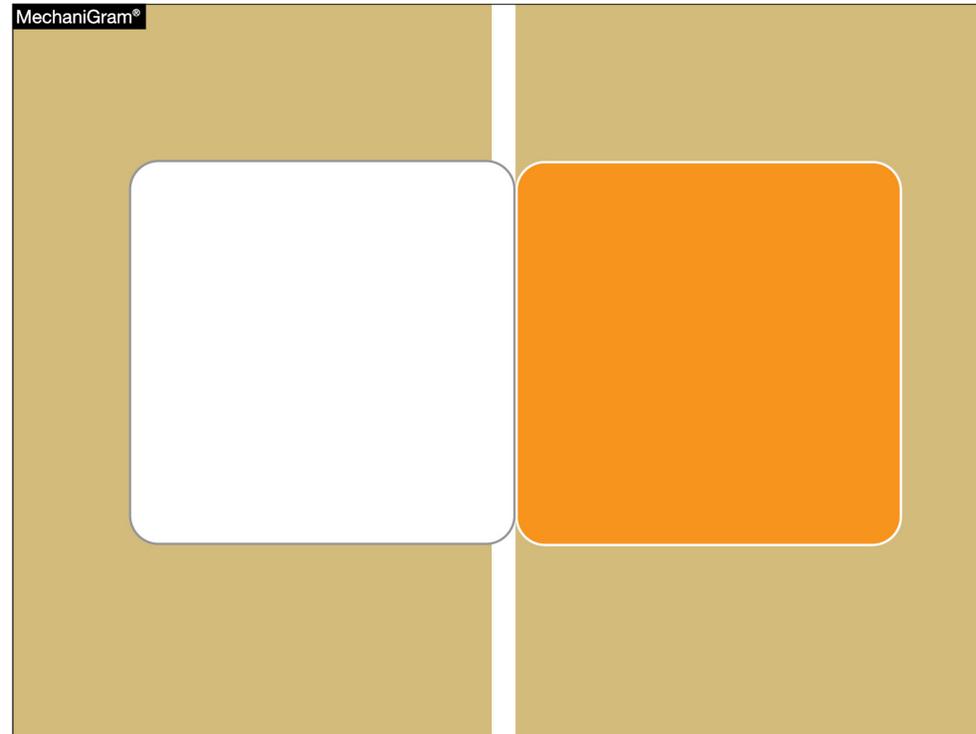
1-2-9, 2-5-1h, 2-16-1h, 8-2-1,
8-2-2a(1-7), 8-2-7

- Starting in 2027, all high school baseball fields will be required to use the double first base.
- State associations may implement the change in 2026.
- **NJSIAA Home Team dictates use in 2026.**



DOUBLE FIRST BASE

1-2-9





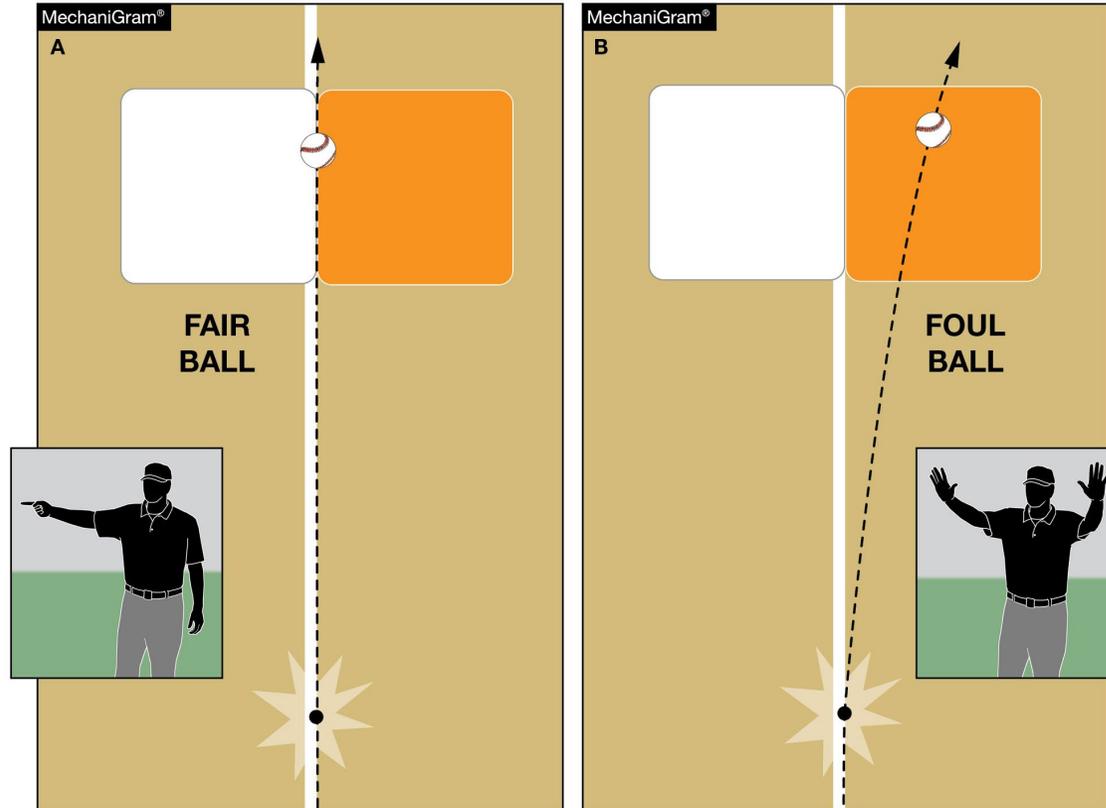
DOUBLE FIRST BASE

1-2-9

- **ART. 9 . . .** Effective January 1, 2027, the double first base will be required. The double first base shall be a white base and a contrasting solid color. The white portion of the base is located in fair territory and the colored portion is located in foul territory. The double first base is split by the first base foul line. They shall be installed with no space between the two portions of the double first base. Both double first bases (white and colored), second and third bases shall be white bags...their anchor systems.

DOUBLE FIRST BASE

2-5-1h, 2-16-1h





DOUBLE FIRST BASE

2-5-1h

ART. 1 . . . A fair ball is a batted ball which:

a.- g. Remains the same.

h. hits or bounds over any portion of the white portion of the double first base.



DOUBLE FIRST BASE

2-16-1h

ART. 1 . . . A foul ball is a batted ball which:

a.- g. Remains the same.

h. hits or bounds over the contrasting color portion of the double first base without first being a fair ball.

DOUBLE FIRST BASE

8-2-1





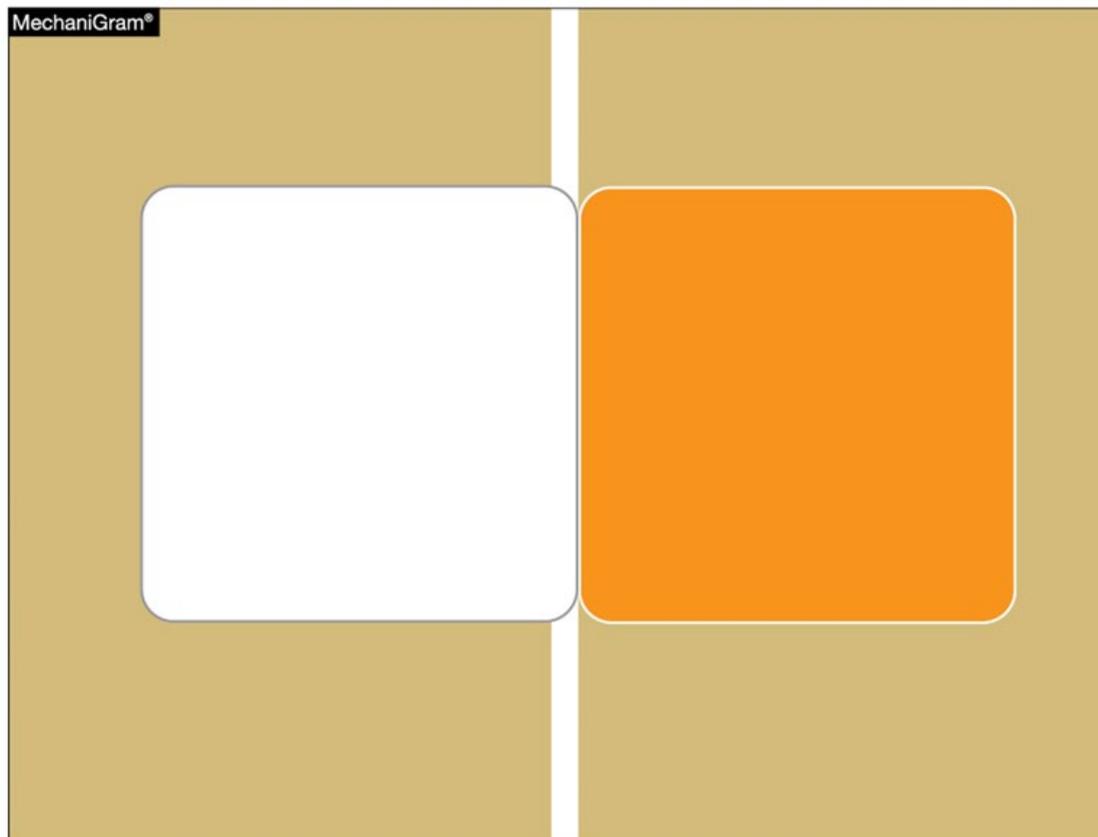
DOUBLE FIRST BASE

8-2-1

ART. 1 . . . An advancing runner shall touch first, second, third and then home plate in order, including awarded bases. A batter-runner shall use the colored base on the initial play at first base unless the fielder is drawn to the side of the colored base (dropped third strike only), in which case the batter-runner would touch the white base and the fielder to the colored base. On a dropped third strike, fielder and batter-runner may touch white or colored base.

DOUBLE FIRST BASE

8-2-2a(1-7)





DOUBLE FIRST BASE

8-2-2a(1-7)

ART. 2 . . . A returning runner shall retouch the bases in reverse order. If the ball is dead because of an uncaught foul, it is not necessary for a returning runner to retouch intervening bases. The umpire will not make the ball live until the runner returns to the appropriate base.



DOUBLE FIRST BASE

8-2-2a(1-7)

a. Runners tagging up on fly balls, leading off on a pitch, or returning to first base on an attempted pick-off can only use the white portion of the base. A defensive player may use only the fair portion of the base when a play is being made on the batter-runner on any live ball from within the foul lines or from third base foul line It is interference when the batter-runner, on a force play, touches only the white portion of the base and collides with the fielder in the process of catching a thrown ball while on the white portion of the base.

DOUBLE FIRST BASE

8-2-2a(1-7)

- The lone exception is when there is a dropped third strike, in which case the batter-runner may use the white portion of the base and the fielder may use the colored portion of the base.
- On a dropped third strike, both the fielder and runner may use either portion of the base.





DOUBLE FIRST BASE

8-2-2a(1-7)

Obstruction is called on the defense when there is a force play on the batter-runner, who touches only the colored portion and collides with the fielder about to catch a thrown ball while also on the colored portion of the base.

1. The batter-runner should use the colored base on the initial play at first base, unless the fielder is drawn to the colored base because of a dropped third strike, in which case the BR would go to the white base only.



DOUBLE FIRST BASE

8-2-2a(1-7)

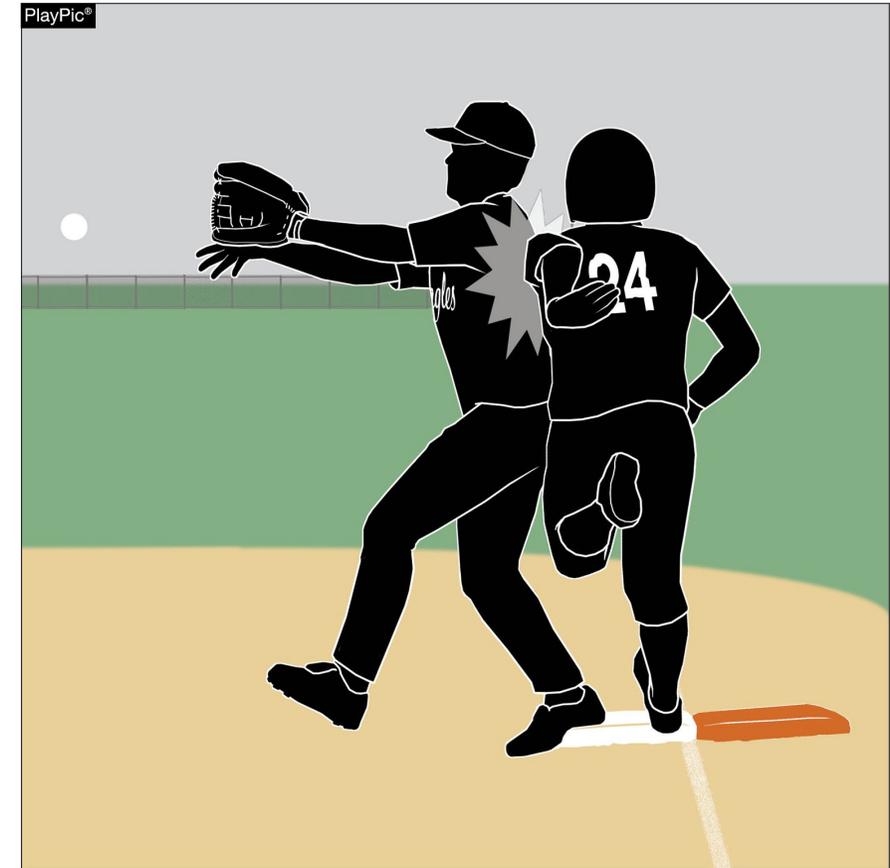
2. Once the batter-runner reaches first base, the runner must always return to the white base.

3. On extra base hits or other balls hit to the outfield when there is no chance for a play to be made at the double first base, the batter-runner may touch either the white or colored section of the base.

4. When tagging up on a fly ball, the white section of the base must be used by the runner. One foot is permitted to extend behind or on the colored base provided the front foot is touching the white section of the base.

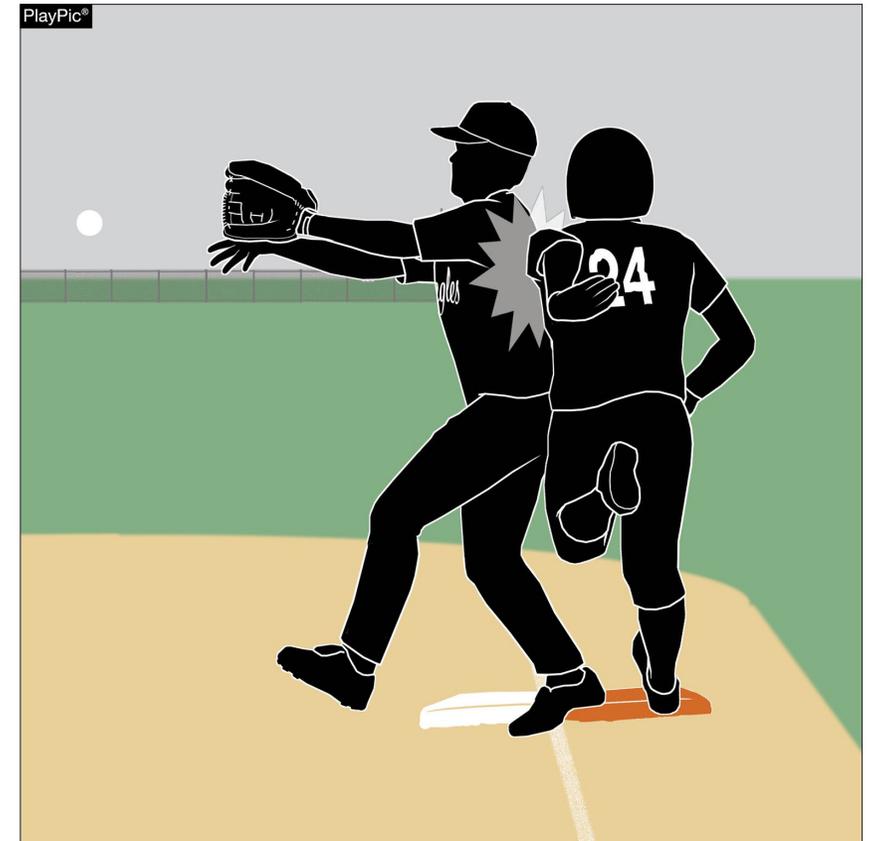
DOUBLE FIRST BASE 8-2-2a(1-7)

- If a batter-runner on a force play touches only the white portion of the base and collides with a fielder who is entitled to catch a thrown ball while touching the white portion of the base, interference should be ruled.



DOUBLE FIRST BASE 8-2-2a(1-7)

- If a batter-runner on a force play touches only the colored portion of the base and collides with a fielder who is not legally entitled to catch a thrown ball while touching the colored portion of the base, obstruction should be ruled.





DOUBLE FIRST BASE

8-2-2a(1-7)

5. On attempted pick-off plays, the runner must return to the white section of the base only. This includes a throw from the pitcher, catcher, or any other player, in an attempt to retire the runner at the double first base.

6. The double first base does not change any other rule concerning interference or obstruction at first base. The batter-runner must still avoid interference with the fielder attempting to field a batted ball.



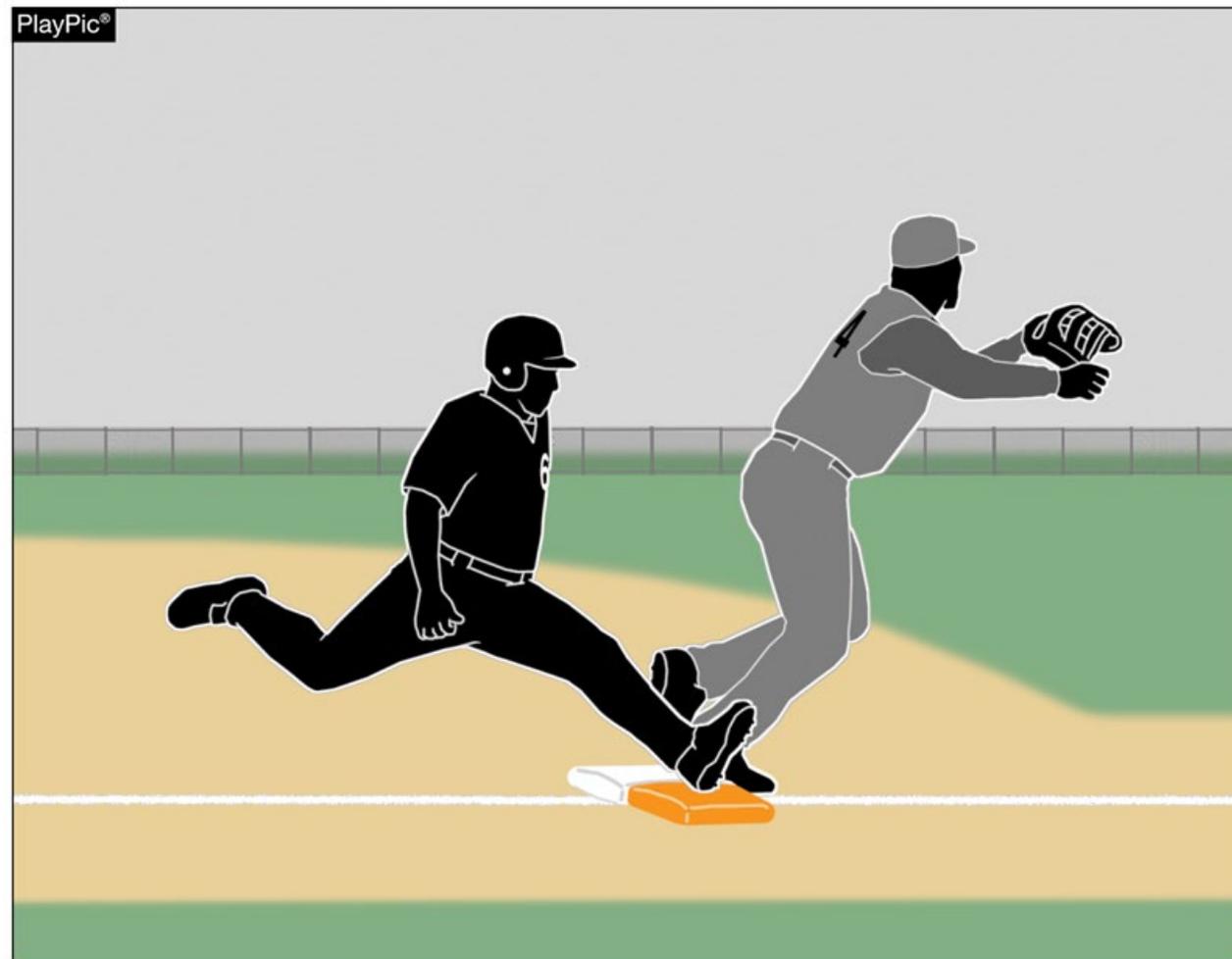
DOUBLE FIRST BASE

8-2-2a(1-7)

7. On base on balls, the offense or the defense may touch either the white or colored base.

DOUBLE FIRST BASE

8-2-7





DOUBLE FIRST BASE

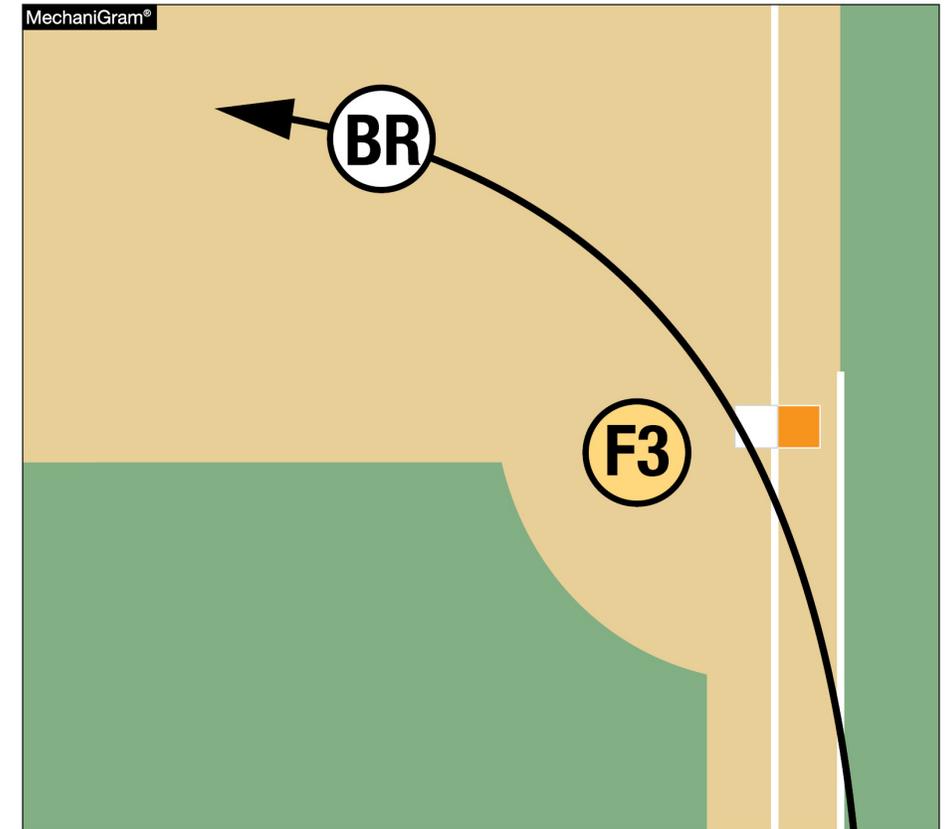
8-2-7

ART. 7 . . . A batter-runner who reaches first base safely and then overruns or over slides may immediately return without liability of being put out provided the batter-runner does not attempt or feint an advance to second. Once the batter-runner reaches first base (colored), the runner shall use the white base.

DOUBLE FIRST BASE

1-2-9, 2-5-1h, 2-16-1h, 8-2-1,
8-2-2a(1-7), 8-2-7

- On extra-base hits or other balls hit to the outfield when there is no chance for a play to be made at the double first base, the batter-runner may touch either portion of the base.
- Once a batter reaches first base safely, the colored portion of the base essentially disappears, and all legal touches of first base require the use of the white portion of the base.





DOUBLE FIRST BASE

1-2-9, 2-5-1h, 2-16-1h, 8-2-1,
8-2-2a(1-7), 8-2-7

Rationale: Risk minimization.

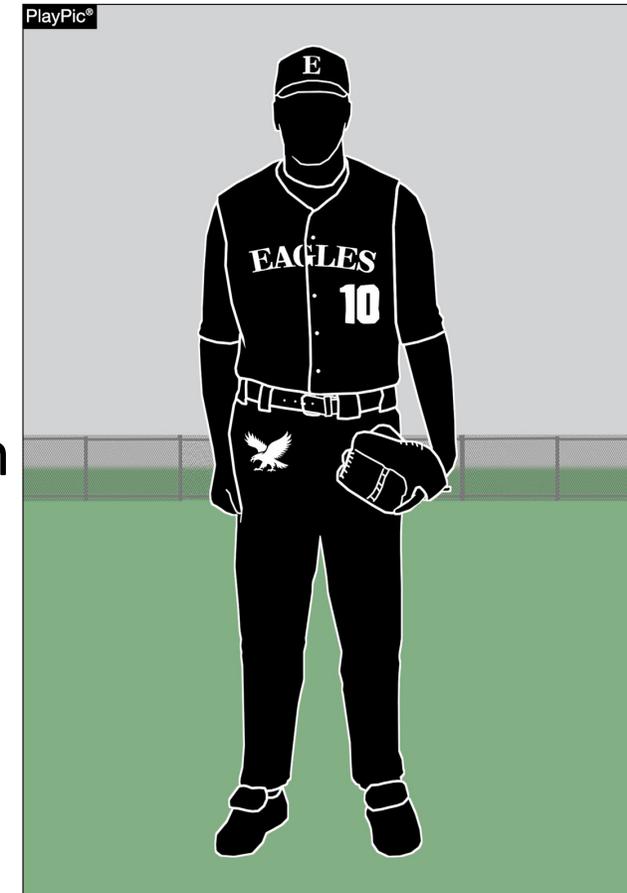


Rule 1-4-4

ART. 4 . . . The school's official uniform... (The same restriction shall apply to either the manufacturer's logo/trademark or reference.) Effective, January 1, 2027, The school's name, school nickname, school logo, school mascot, and/or the player's name are permitted on the uniform top and/or pants. One American flag 2 inches x 3 inches may be worn or occupy space on each item of uniform apparel.

Rationale:

This is a universal rule adaptation by every NFHS Rules Committee to be uniformed for every NFHS rule publication.





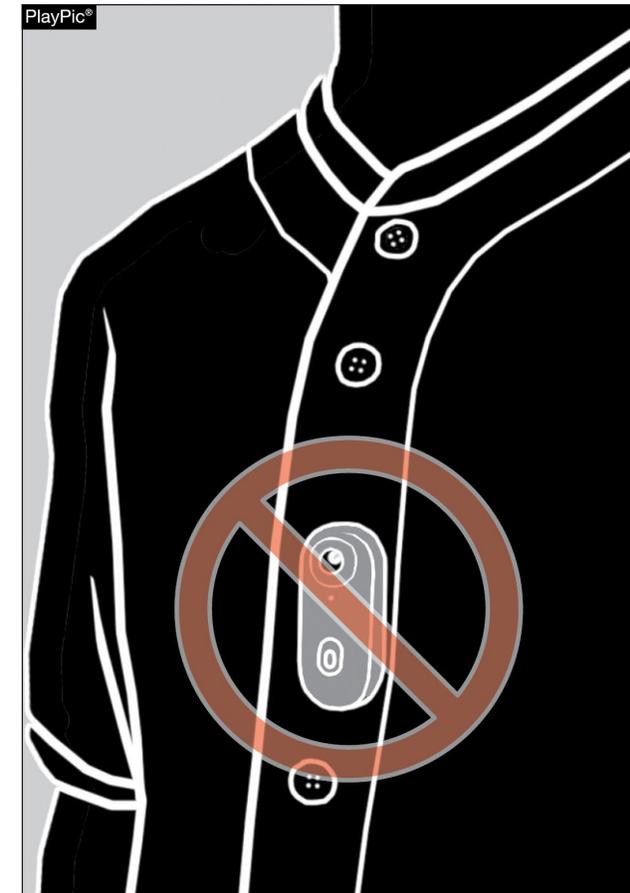
Rule 1-6-3

Articles 1 and 2 remain the same.

ART. 3 . . . No player shall wear any audio (microphone) or video (camera) device during the game.

Rationale: No player participating in the game will be allowed to wear any type of audio or video device to record or transmit audio or video. This is a universal rule adaptation by every NFHS Rules Committee to be uniformed for every NFHS rule publication.

NJSIAA = This also applies to pre and post game activities on the field.



MEETINGS

Rule 2-10-3, 3-4-6



ART. 3 . . . A player-to-player defensive meeting includes two or more players (3-4-6).

Rationale: Definition for player-to-player meeting.



MEETINGS

Rule 3-4-6

ART. 6 . . . Each team, when on defense, may be granted not more than one player-to-player meeting during an inning to permit players to confer with defensive personnel. The umpire shall deny any subsequent player-to-player defensive team requests for meetings.



- The following plays are not defined as player-to-player meetings:
- Injury time-outs for either offense or defense. Players will be able to meet without penalty during an injury time-out.
- Offensive Time-out – If the offense calls time, the defensive players can meet and not be in violation of the rule.
- Other Team Conferences – If the other team conferences, the defensive players can meet and not be in violation of the rule.
- After Putout (Outfield) – After a putout in the outfield, with no runners on base, the ball shall be thrown to a cutoff player and if desired to one additional player before being returned to the pitcher. The returner can either throw the ball to the pitcher or walk it to them with words of encouragement or a congratulatory message.
- After Putout (Infield or Strikeout) - After a putout in the infield, with no runners on base, the ball shall be returned directly to the pitcher. The returner can either throw the ball to the pitcher or walk it to them with words of encouragement or a congratulatory message.
- Fifth Warm-up Pitch– Upon the fifth warm-up pitch at the start of the half-inning, the catcher can either throw the ball to the pitcher or walk it to them with words of encouragement or a congratulatory message.



Rule 3-4-6

Rationale: Utilizing the rule addition will improve the pace of play, while still allowing the meetings to continue. Currently there is not a limit on defensive player-to-player meetings. This will prevent teams from stalling when the weather or darkness is approaching.



2026 NFHS Baseball Points of Emphasis

DISCIPLINE

- Any unsportsmanlike conduct, arguing or disrespect directed toward umpires will result in disciplinary action, which may include warnings, restriction to the bench or ejection from the game (3-3-1 to 3-3-4 and 10-2-3).





DISCIPLINE

- These penalties are not punitive in nature – they are protective of the values that define high school sports: respect, integrity and personal responsibility.

DISCIPLINE

- Respect for officials is a reflection of the maturity, leadership and character we hope to instill in all participants through educational athletics.



SPORTSMANSHIP (BENCH JOCKEYING AND PROPS)

- Bench jockeying can be considered as negative verbal comments, taunting or attempts to distract, intimidate or embarrass opponents or officials from the dugout – violates the standards of conduct expected in interscholastic competition.



SPORTSMANSHIP (BENCH JOCKEYING AND PROPS)



- By rule, bench jockeying is prohibited and will result in warnings, restrictions or ejections as deemed appropriate by the umpire.



SPORTSMANSHIP (BENCH JOCKEYING AND PROPS)



- Enforcement of this rule is not about silencing enthusiasm – it is about upholding the spirit of fair play and modeling appropriate conduct for students, schools and communities.



SPORTSMANSHIP (BENCH JOCKEYING AND PROPS)

- There is no logical purpose to have props at an education-based athletic event.



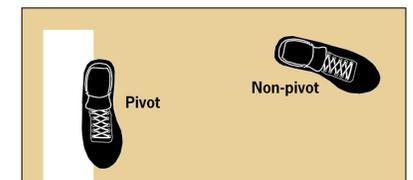
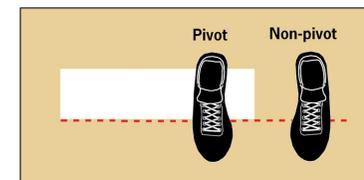
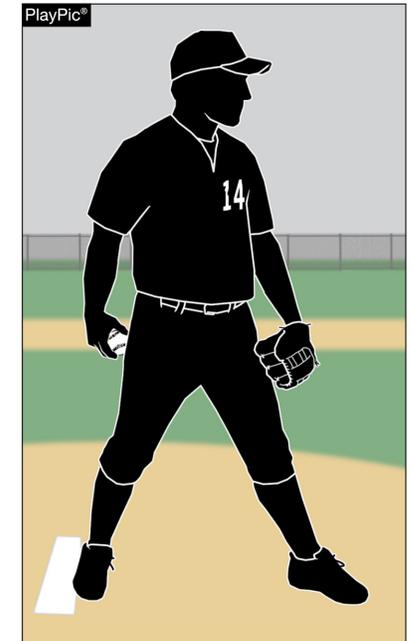
SPORTSMANSHIP (BENCH JOCKEYING AND PROPS)



- The dugout should be a place of encouragement and unity, not derision and distraction.
- Let the game be decided by skill, preparation and respect – not by unnecessary noise and antics.

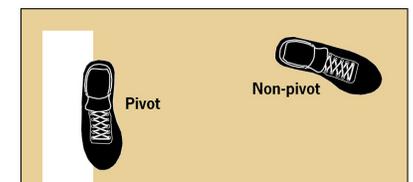
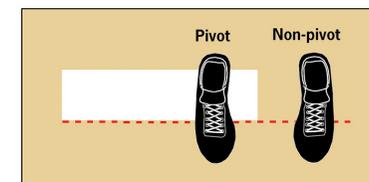
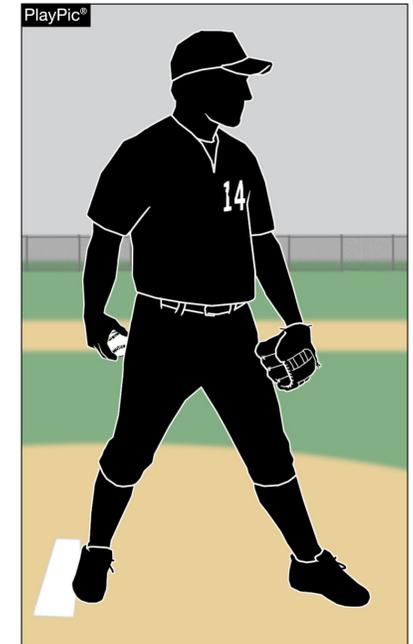
PROPER PITCHING POSITIONS

- Pitchers are required to use one of two positions: the wind-up or the set.
- It is important that umpires, coaches and players know what position the pitcher is using so they know which part of Rule 6 is in play.



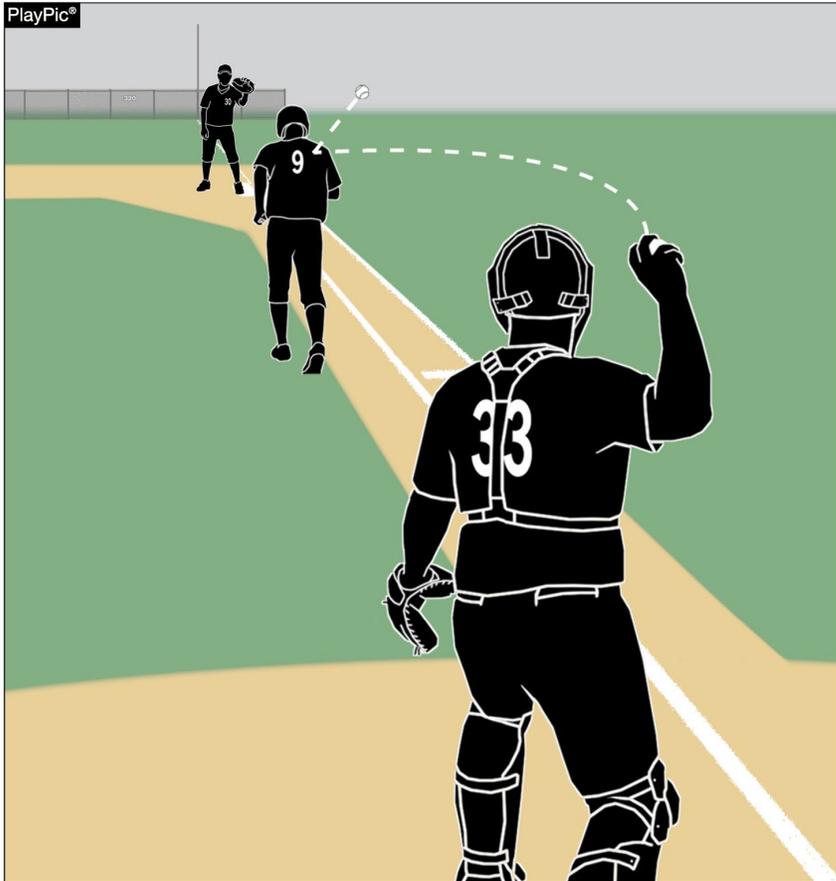
PROPER PITCHING POSITIONS

- The position of the pivot foot determines which of the pitching positions is being used.
- In the wind-up position, the pitcher's pivot foot is in contact with the pitcher's plate and is not parallel to it.
- In the set position, the pivot foot is in contact with or directly in front of and parallel to the pitcher's plate.





RUNNING LANE AWARENESS



- Enforcing the running lane rule (8-4-1g) is vital for player safety, fairness and the educational goals of high school baseball.
- The batter-runner must use the designated lane in foul territory during a play at first base.



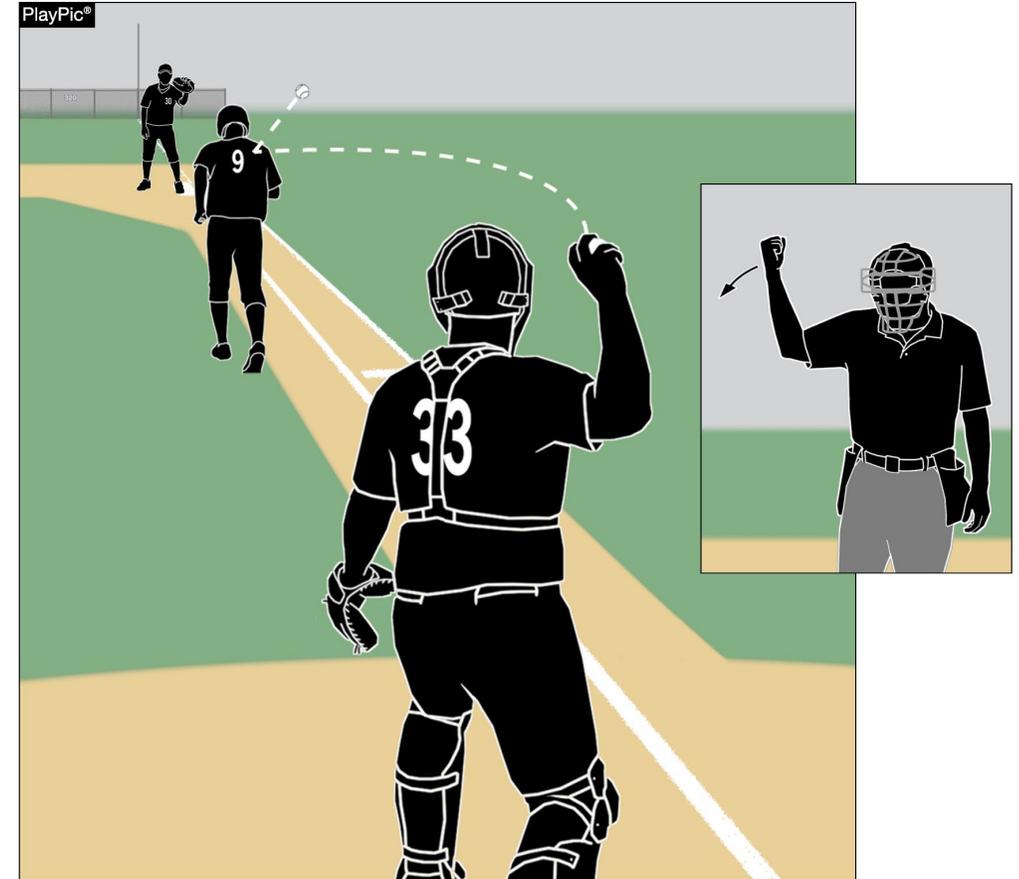
RUNNING LANE AWARENESS

- **1. Safety** – The lane prevents collisions and protects both the runner and the fielder.
- **2. Fair Play** – Staying in the lane avoids unfair interference with defensive plays.
- **3. Consistency** – Regular enforcement promotes accountability and discourages rule violations.
- **4. Education** – Teaching proper lane use reinforces respect for the rules of the game.



RUNNING LANE AWARENESS

- Violations result in interference, with the batter-runner out and runners returned to their previous base.



Baseball Rule Modifications



Baseball Coaches, Athletic Directors, and Umpires are advised to read all rules carefully and to note the following state-approved modifications:

Special Occasions

Rule 1, Section. 4, Article. 4 - For special occasions, commemorative or memorial patches may be worn not to exceed 4 sq. in. They must be worn in a uniform fashion in an appropriate and dignified manner without compromising the integrity of the uniform. The patch must be worn on the jersey. **NJSIAA Approval must be secured prior to placing any commemorative or memorial patch on the uniform.**



Speed-Up Rules

Rule 2, Section 33, Article 1. - Speed Up Rules are adopted in its entirety. Courtesy Runner rules apply to all games; put-out rules are allowed by conference/tournament adoption



Game Ending Rule



Rule 4, Section. 2, Article. 2 - The game shall end when the visiting team is behind 10 or more runs after 4 ½ innings, or after the fifth inning, if either team is 10 runs behind and both teams have had an equal number of times at-bat.

Games shall not end prior to becoming an official game.

RULE 4-4 does not apply in NJ. Opposing coaches shall not mutually agree to shorten a game.

Suspended Game: Rule 4, Section. 2, Article. 4



A two-hour time limit may be approved for (sub-varsity) games by mutual or conference agreement.

The NJSIAA does not approve of suspended games during regular season play.

Exception (a): Conference, League, & County tournament play will be permitted to play under the suspended game rule when a winner is needed to advance or crown a champion.

Exception (b): A Conference, League or County may utilize the suspended game rule at the end of the regular season to determine a conference or division title.

Forfeited Game: Rule 4, Section 4, Article 1a

A game shall be forfeited to the offended team by the umpire when a team is fifteen (15) minutes late in appearing or in beginning play after the umpire calls "play" at scheduled game time. This may be set aside if the umpire considers the delay unavoidable. Athletic Directors and/or Site Management shall relay pertinent information to game umpires, i.e., the bus has broken down.



Protests: Rule 4, Section 5, Article 1

Protests based upon an official's judgment or misinterpretation (misapplication) of the playing rules will not be honored by the NJSIAA.



Umpire Uniform: Rule 10, Section 1, Article 9



Umpires shall wear the navy-blue pullover shirt or state association adopted shirt (Black Shirt or Light Blue). All umpires shall wear the same color shirt during a game, and if they cannot agree, navy blue will be the default color. All other color shirts are prohibited for high school games in New Jersey. Please refer to the Officials Handbook for additional information.

NJSIAA Officials Handbook: Note: Powder-Blue shirts are acceptable for baseball during the regular season only.

Coaching Apparel

All first and third base coaches must wear a helmet while in the coaching box when the ball is live. The helmet may be:

- Tradition hard-shell with a visor and no ear flaps.
- Single ear flap.
- Double ear flap.
- No plastic hat liners or inserts may be worn within a cloth hat to meet this requirement.

All baseball officials are required to enforce this policy and shall not start ANY inning until ALL coaches on the field are in compliance with this NJSIAA safety policy.

- **All coaches must wear baseball-style pants.** Coaches may wear any team-appropriate upper-body apparel.



Sunglasses

High School baseball is an extra-curricular activity and an extension of the classroom. Coaches are expected to direct their players to wear sunglasses as designed and not as a fashion statement.



Eye Black



NJSIAA strongly recommends that coaches address the proper wearing of eye black with players.

Only one Straight Line or Strip of Eye Black is permitted under each eye.

If a manufactured strip has the maker's name displayed when applied, it is legal.

Umpires are directed to leave enforcement to the coach and involve themselves only when the eye black is determined to be taunting or derogatory reference to religion, race, sex and other groups.

Bench / Dugout Area

The primary responsibility of officials, athletic directors, and coaches is the safety of participants. This includes adult coaches as well as student athletes.

NFHS rules require players and coaches to be within the confines of the bench/dugout area while the ball is live. It is recommended that the bench/dugout area be protected by a fence. No one shall be permitted to stand in the open area that serves as an entrance to the bench/dugout area unless protected by a closed gate.

If the bench/dugout area is not protected by a fence, coaches may utilize a temporary protective device, i.e., a batting practice screen, to sit behind. The bench/dugout area may only be extended away from home plate; not toward home plate.

Coaches may not create a dead ball area and sit in front of the bench/dugout area's protective fence even if protected by the backstop fencing.

When coaches are outside the designated bench/dugout area and the ball is live, the coach will receive two (2) warnings. Upon the third warning, the coach will be restricted to the bench/dugout area.





NJSIAA Baseball Certification Test

- Opens on or about February 5th.
- 50 Questions
- Passing Score = 80%

Registrant should open their Arbiter Account.

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Have a GREAT season!

