



The Relief Pitcher

Presidents Message

The Executive Board is making a concerted effort to improve the SJUA. In the past month, we have met several times and discussed various issues to improve the way we do things.

We have been in contact with various organizations, a facility, and loads of potential candidates to become new umpires.

This offseason is shaping up to be very fruitful for the SJUA with a record number of interest from potential umpiring candidates.

I want to wish all of you a happy and healthy holiday season. Happy New Year and I look forward to seeing you soon.

-Gerry Malamisura

Treasurer's Report

Here is the Treasurer's Report:

For the month of November:

Opening Balance: \$7,058.14

Money in:

11/30/2023 Interest Paid \$0.26

Money Out:

11/9/2023 Prospectors - Board Meeting \$(85.88)

11/17/2023 Color Craft Signs - Deposit \$(400.00)

11/17/2023 Garry Ormsby - Quickbooks Sub \$(330.00)

11/20/2023 Gerry Malamisura - Hotstovers Banquet Tickets \$(200.00)

11/20/2023 Hot Stovers Baseball Club - Ad for banquet book \$(100.00)

11/20/2023 Doc Schmitt reimbursement for expenses \$(49.07)

11/22/2023 Color Craft Signs - Balance remaining on order \$ (410.00)

End-of-Month Balance: \$5,483.45

-John Henderson

Sunshine Committee

SJUA would like to extend well wishes to junior member Gerry Malamisura Jr. as he goes under the knife for ACL surgery in late December.

(If you know of anyone who has lost a family member or knows of an upcoming birth of a child, or any other sunshine worthy event, please text or email Gary Schmitt to be added to the newsletter)

Secretary Report:

I hope everyone has a very Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year. As we enter into the New Year, I ask again to please begin to register for the upcoming season. To register please go to

<http://www.NJSIAA.org> and [complete your registration and background check. For your concussion course, please goto www.NFHSlern.com](http://www.NFHSlern.com)

(Continued on Page 2)



IMPORTANT NJSIAA DATES

First Practice:
3/14/2024

First Scrimmage:
3/21/2024

Opening Day:
4/1/2024

FROM THE DESK OF THE SUPERVISOR OF OFFICIALS



Secretary Report: (Continued)

The number of rule books we receive are based on registered officials. Books will be released in early January. I expect the online test to open early February and end late February early March.

-Gary Schmitt

Hello and welcome again of many baseball articles for umpires. I will reiterate that although it is out-of-season, these articles will hopefully inspire and motivate you to start thinking about baseball. The 2024 season is close.

Don't forget to get your physical exam by a professional caretaker and include an eye exam! (lol).

Since the last "Newsletter" article, there were no additional Rule Changes. The NJSIAA scheduled a Rules Interpretation meeting on Monday, January 29, 2024 that I will attend. Remember, if you have any ideas, topics, or questions that you would like for me to address, just send me an email at gtj2963@comcast.net .

RULE CHANGES: (PREVIOUSLY FROM NOVEMBER)

Player/Coach Communication Equipment: Non-electronic wristbands with various codes for offense or defense are permissible provided they are a solid color and worn on the wrist or forearm. (Pitchers cannot wear the item on the pitching arm and cannot be the color white or grey.) First violation: Team Warning to coach; second violation: Ejection of offender along with head coach.

One-way electronic communication devices are now legal from the dugout area to the catcher while on defense only for the purpose of calling pitches! The coach must be in the dugout/bench area when using the device. First violation: Team warning to coach; second violation: Ejection of offender and head coach.

Umpire-In-Chief will may forfeit game for prescribed infractions by coaches, players, or team/bench personnel. (The word spectators has been removed) Umpires have jurisdiction over the confines of the field, players, coaches, and bench personnel. Any issues with spectators must be dealt with by game management personnel.

Cadet Class: As of this writing, we have (20) cadets signed up to start training classes on Thursday, January 11, 2024. Classes will be every Thursday evening at the Riverside Fire Station from 6:30 - 9:30. Classes are expected to end on February 29, 2024. Please urge anyone thinking about becoming an umpire to contact an Executive Board member or complete the on-line registration process at sjumps.com Second year cadets are encouraged to attend as a refresher course.

Please don't hesitate to provide any recommendations you feel would be beneficial. Good luck, best wishes, and a Happy Holiday season to all!

-George T. Joo



Happy Holidays

Assignor's Corner:

Hope you all had a very good Thanksgiving. As we head into the bulk of the holiday season, let me wish you all a Happy Holiday, Joyous Tidings, a healthy New Year, and nothing but the best.

A shout out to Bruce Lazaruk for his award by the Hot Stovers recognizing his many contributions and years of service to South Jersey Baseball. Well deserved.

Keep your availability up to date. You can fill in some of your dates now that you can't work. Dates like birthdays (Yours, wife, kids, etc.), anniversaries (Yours, parents, and the like). If you have a business trip or vacation planned, also put in those dates.

We will be cutting back on some of the middle schools this year. We will also be forming crews. More on this later.

With the season rapidly approaching (Spring Training is around the corner; Pitchers and Catchers will report in about 30 days) start reviewing your rule books and field manuals. There is no real excuse for not knowing the rules. The test for this year is not overly far off.

As a reminder, during the scholastic season, we expect you to prioritize the SJUA first. You are free to work for whom ever you wish. If you do college ball, you should already have your schedule (I would think) and have blocked those dates. If you have not, please do. If you get a college assignment and have already been assigned by me, call me.

With the above said, if you accept an assignment and then try to turn it back because you have something better, that is one good way to upset the assignor. This practice is generally frowned upon. If you take it, do it. That said, call me and I will work with you; just be honest with me.

-Joe Rosenberg

News & Notes:

Below find the NFHS rule changes for 2024.

1-6-1 (NEW) SECTION 6 PLAYER COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT:

ART. 1 . . . Any wristband with defensive shifts/offensive plays/pitching choices or game directions attached shall be considered non-electronic equipment and is permitted as long as it is a single, solid color. For pitchers, it may not contain the colors white, gray or be distracting. It does not have to match the color of the uniform or the sleeves worn underneath the uniform. It shall only be worn on a player(s) wrist or forearm and pitchers shall wear it on their non-pitching arm.

PENALTY: The umpire shall issue a team warning to coach of the team involved and the next offender(s) of that team will be ejected along with the head coach.

Rationale: Clarification. With the increase in popularity of these style of communication systems, confusion has been realized when the players wear them other than on their arm. This change will prohibit these types of products from being worn other places.

1-6-2 (NEW) SECTION 6 PLAYER COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT

ART. 2 . . . One-way electronic communication devices are permissible from the dugout to the catcher while the team is on defense for the purpose of calling pitches. When using the electronic communication device, the coach cannot be outside the dugout/bench area.

PENALTY: The umpire shall issue a team warning to coach of the team involved and the next offender(s) of that team will be ejected along with the head coach.

Rationale: This rule allows for a team to utilize an electronic device for the purpose of calling pitches from the dugout. The device would only be able to be one-way, meaning the player cannot use an electronic device to respond or communicate back to the coach. Various technologies, earpiece, electronic band or a smart watch could be used giving teams several options at varying costs. No other player would be able to wear or use this device nor would the coach be able to communicate with any other player using electronic communication.

3-2-5 (NEW) SECTION 2 COACHING

ART. 5 . . . A coach may use a one-way electronic communication device to communicate to the catcher for the purpose of calling pitches. Coaches may not use electronic communication device(s) to communicate with any other team member while on defense or any team member while on offense. When using the electronic communication device, the coach cannot be outside the dugout/bench area.

PENALTY: The umpire shall issue a team warning to coach of the team involved and the next offender(s) of that team will be ejected along with the head coach.

Rationale: Allows for the coach to communicate with the catcher using an electronic communication device for the purpose of calling pitches.

10-2-3h SECTION 2 UMPIRE-IN-CHIEF

h. Forfeit the game for prescribed infractions by ~~spectators~~, coaches, players or team/bench personnel.

Rationale: Umpires have jurisdiction over the confines of the field, players, coaches and team/bench personnel. If there are issues with spectators, it is the responsibility of game management to deal with spectators and to ensure that the facility is safe for all involved.

Suggested Speed-Up Rules After Put Outs #3

Rules 1 and 2 remain the same.

~~#3 Following the final out in any inning, the ball shall be given to the nearest umpire. The plate umpire shall give the ball to the catcher. The base umpire shall place the ball on the pitcher's plate.~~

Rationale: This is a NFHS Softball rule book mechanic that needs to be deleted from the NFHS Baseball rule book.

2024 POE

The NFHS Baseball Rules Committee and the NFHS Board of Directors believes there are areas of the game of interscholastic baseball that need to be addressed and given special attention. These areas of concern are often cyclical – some areas need more attention than others, and that is why they might appear in the rules book for consecutive editions. These concerns are identified as “Points of Emphasis.” For the 2024 high school baseball season, attention is being called to: Malicious Contact, Profanity (Direct or Indirect) and Pace of Play. When a topic is included in the Points of Emphasis, these topics are important enough to reinforce throughout the academic year because additional attention is warranted.

Malicious Contact

While not a new topic, malicious contact registers as the third most discussed Point of Emphasis (POE) behind good sporting behavior and pitching restrictions. Malicious contact was a POE in 2006-2008 and also in 2014. The frequency of emphasis is not surprising. It is a topic that begs for a complete and understandable definition, but is unable to find one that captures every possible scenario. The majority of intentional collisions occur at home plate when the catcher is attempting to make a play on a base runner. Conventional wisdom from past NFHS Baseball Rules Committees would say that malicious contact can be initiated (and penalized) by either the offensive or defensive player(s), and that incidental contact is expected in baseball. An example is the infrequent but dramatic “train wreck” play, where the thrown ball, the fielder and the runner meet at the same time. It is always a violent convergence, but not intentional, nor is anyone trying to hurt the other. It is just a normal baseball play.

Contact or a collision is considered to be malicious if (1) the contact is the result of intentional excessive force, and/or (2) there is intent to injure. The absence of these two conditions does not preclude the presence of malicious contact but would provide a reasonable starting point for proper interpretation. Rules guidance can be found in Rules 2, 3, 5, 8, Dead Ball Table and Base Running Awards Table. The NFHS rules code is education-based not only for the coaches and players, but for the umpires as well. Umpires should have the flexibility to judge witnessed contact as malicious or not. Their judgment should not be removed by rule but enhanced by education, video review, umpire board/chapter training, game experience and field locations/mechanics.

Profanity (Direct or Indirect)

Education-based athletics is a direct extension of the classroom. When the educational component is removed, then everything changes, and it becomes a completely different game, devoid of accountability and structure. A student who blurts out a profanity either toward someone or simply out of frustration in school would be disciplined by the classroom teacher or the building principal. There is no excuse for foul language in school or on the baseball field. Regardless of what is portrayed at other levels, this is not acceptable and should be addressed by the umpire(s). The rule support for this behavior is clear, the penalties are: (1) a verbal warning to the offender, (2) issuance of a written warning to the offender which warrants being restricted to the bench/dugout for the remainder of the game, or (3) eject the offender for a major offense. The Bench and Field Conduct Section (NFHS Rule 3-3-1f1-4) provides several sub-articles addressing profanity and harmful behaviors. High school sports and other activities exist to lift

people up, positively challenge them and their abilities, not to demean or tear people down. The goal is to treat everyone fairly and treat each other with respect. Any language that is profane, intimidating, insulting, demeaning or hurtful will not be tolerated. Coaches, school administrators and parent groups should work together to ensure that the game creates a positive environment for all involved. Profanity spoken loud enough to be heard is profanity that needs to be dealt with immediately.

Pace of Play

High school athletics is education-based for an age group that ranges from 14 to 18 years of age. Baseball is an extension of the classroom. Unlike other sports, baseball is not “clock” driven. The average time of a high school varsity baseball game is around 2 hours and 9 minutes. At other levels of the sport, time is more crucial and has been the focus of those rules-writing organizations. At the advanced levels, some longtime existing plays and practices have been eliminated to shorten the game and in-part enhance the fan experience. High school baseball does not have these same issues and does not share the same challenges of production costs, satellite time, throngs of network media or maximizing the entertainment value or offerings for the fans. These goals are very simplistic. The NFHS encourages students to participate in high school activities, learn from play and be better citizens from playing. While high school baseball does not have overall game-time restrictions, the NFHS is cognizant that extended games are part of baseball. Baseball games can be more efficient with a focus on time and time management. Pace of play involves several factors, and the NFHS believes that giving special attention to these five areas will assist with the flow and pace of our game.

20-second Time Limit Between Pitches/Plays (6-2-2c)

This rule has been in our rule book since the late 1970s as a tool to use when the pitcher is prolonging the delivery of the pitch because of gamesmanship or overall lack of game efficiency. Past rule committees did not intend to negatively impact a game that is being played at a reasonable pace and rhythm. The rule was meant to be utilized when preventative officiating fails to provide the necessary outcome. When talking to the pitcher regarding the length of delay between each pitch, or speaking with the catcher to “nudge” the other half of the battery to pitch in a more timely manner, or mentioning to the coach at the half-inning that the game is being affected by the pitcher’s delay does not change the pitcher’s behavior, then this is a problem and would result in the penalty being applied.

Time Between Half-Innings (6-2-2 EXCEPTION)

There are a lot of moving pieces in between half-innings. By rule, the time from the last out to the next pitch is 1 minute and 20 seconds. The role of the umpire is to facilitate the defense getting into place, the pitcher warming up and start the inning. There is no place for visiting with the fans or having an extended discussion with the other umpire(s).

Batter Repeatedly Stepping Out of the Batter’s Box (7-3-1)

The NFHS Rules Book is clear when the batter is allowed to step out of the batter’s box and when they cannot. It is understandable and part of the game for the batter to step out of the batter’s box to get the signal from the third

base coach on how to approach the next pitch because it is very situational. The batter needs to be encouraged to get back in the batter's box with a sense of expediency. However, repeatedly stepping out to alter the rhythm of the pitcher or delay the game is not acceptable and the penalty needs to be applied by the umpire.

Umpire's Time Management

Time management is crucial to how the game progresses. If the umpire is not consistent in motivating both teams to get off and on the field, expedite conferences, encourage the batter from excessively stepping out of the batter's box, this will add unnecessary delay to the contest. The umpire cannot control the skill level of the players of both teams; however, there are other areas that the umpire can positively impact the pace and speed of the game. The players' abilities will affect the speed of the game, but the other areas that the umpire has direct control over should be monitored and utilized in creating a sense of urgency during the contests.

Excessive Player Conferences

A player conference is very different than a charged conference. The NFHS supports teammates encouraging each other and developing that camaraderie. That is part of the lesson one learns from playing a team sport. However, when team bonding becomes excessive and it begins to delay the game, then the umpire needs to step in and expedite the conclusion of the meeting.



COMMITTEE REPORTS :

Recruitment/Retention Committee: (Committee Head George Sanders)
The committee has been very busy over the last two months. Currently we have almost 30 inquiries into our cadet class and 20 confirmed attending. Although this is much better than in years past we are not done. The goal for the cadet is at least 25. We continue to do email marketing to various coaches and groups, distribution of flyers and Social Media postings. We will start reaching out to those lost members and see if we can pull some of them back. We still need everyone's help. Please post the flyer to your Social Media account, if you know a lost member, see what you can do to get them back. Baseball season will be here before we know it and the cadet class starts in early January. Have a great holiday.

Grievance Committee: (Committee Head Ken Shugars)

No new information at this time. If you have a grievance, please contact the committee.

Social Media Committee: (Committee Head Matt Korang)

We need new action photos. There have been updates to the website regarding Bruce Lazurak receiving recognition from Hot Stovers association.

Election Committee: (Committee Head Tom Wajda)

If anyone is interested in joining the Election Committee, please contact Tom Wajda. There is one spot open on this committee.

Bylaws Committee: (Committee Head Curt Weller)

Lee Gronkowski and John Fiorilla have agreed to help out on the Bylaws Committee. We're in the process of reviewing the bylaws to determine where we might be able to simplify them and make them more useful to the group. If anyone has any specific areas they'd like to see addressed, please contact Curt Weller via email bluewheels41@gmail.com. Also, if anyone else would like to volunteer to assist in the review, extra eyes are always welcomed!