

# 2026 NFHS Softball Rules PowerPoint

- Rule Changes
- Editorial Changes
- Points of Emphasis

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## NFHS INFORMATION

# National Federation of State High School Associations



- NFHS (located in Indianapolis, IN – Est. 1920):
  - National leader and advocate for high school athletics and performing arts programs.
  - Serves 51 state associations, 19,800 high schools and 12 million student participants.
  - Writes playing rules for 18 high school sports for boys and girls.
  - Offers online education courses for high school coaches, officials, parents, students and others.
  - Ensures that students have opportunity to enjoy healthy participation, achievement and good sportsmanship in education-based activities.





# NFHS Rules Review Committee

- The NFHS Rules Review Committee is chaired by the chief operating officer and composed of all rules editors. After each committee concludes its deliberations and has adopted its recommended changes for the subsequent year, such revisions will be evaluated by the Rules Review Committee.



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Chief Operating Officer



**Lindsey Atkinson**  
Boys & Girls Lacrosse and Volleyball



**Julie Cochran**  
Cross Country, Soccer and Track & Field



**Bob Colgate**  
Flag Football, Football and Sports Medicine



**Elliot Hopkins**  
Baseball and Wrestling



**Monica Maxwell**  
Basketball, Field Hockey and Girls Gymnastics



**Dan Schuster**  
Ice Hockey



**Sandy Searcy**  
Softball, Swimming & Diving and Water Polo



**Chris Paulson**  
Spirit



# NFHS Softball Rules Committee



Andi Osters  
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Lansing, MI  
Chair - 2026



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Franklin, MA  
Section 1 - 2028



Sarah Bridenbaugh  
Lexington, KY  
Section 2 - 2025



Michelle Yeater  
Prosperity, SC  
Section 3 - 2026



Kim Williams  
Swansea, IL  
Section 4 - 2028



Kerrie Rosati  
Indianapolis, IN  
Section 4 - 2027



Lisa Quednow  
Brooklyn Center, MN  
Section 5 - 2028



Steve Roberts  
North Little Rock, AR  
Section 6 - 2025



Laura Traeger  
Reno, NV  
Section 7 - 2026



Tonia Burk  
Twin Falls, ID  
Section 8 - 2027



Missy Smith  
Wilsonville, OR  
Section 8 - 2027



Eli Field  
Frenchtown, MT  
NFHS Coaches 2025



Michiael Shannon  
Bloomington, IN  
NFHS Officials 2026



# NFHS Publications

- The NFHS writes playing rules for 18 sports for boys and girls at the high school level and publishes 2 million pieces of materials annually.





# NFHS Digital

- NFHS Digital is the New Publications Platform that includes:
  - Rules Books
  - Case Books
  - Officials Manuals
  - Policy Debate Quarterly
  - Other NFHS Publications
- Visit ***[nfhs.org/NFHSDigital](https://nfhs.org/NFHSDigital)***

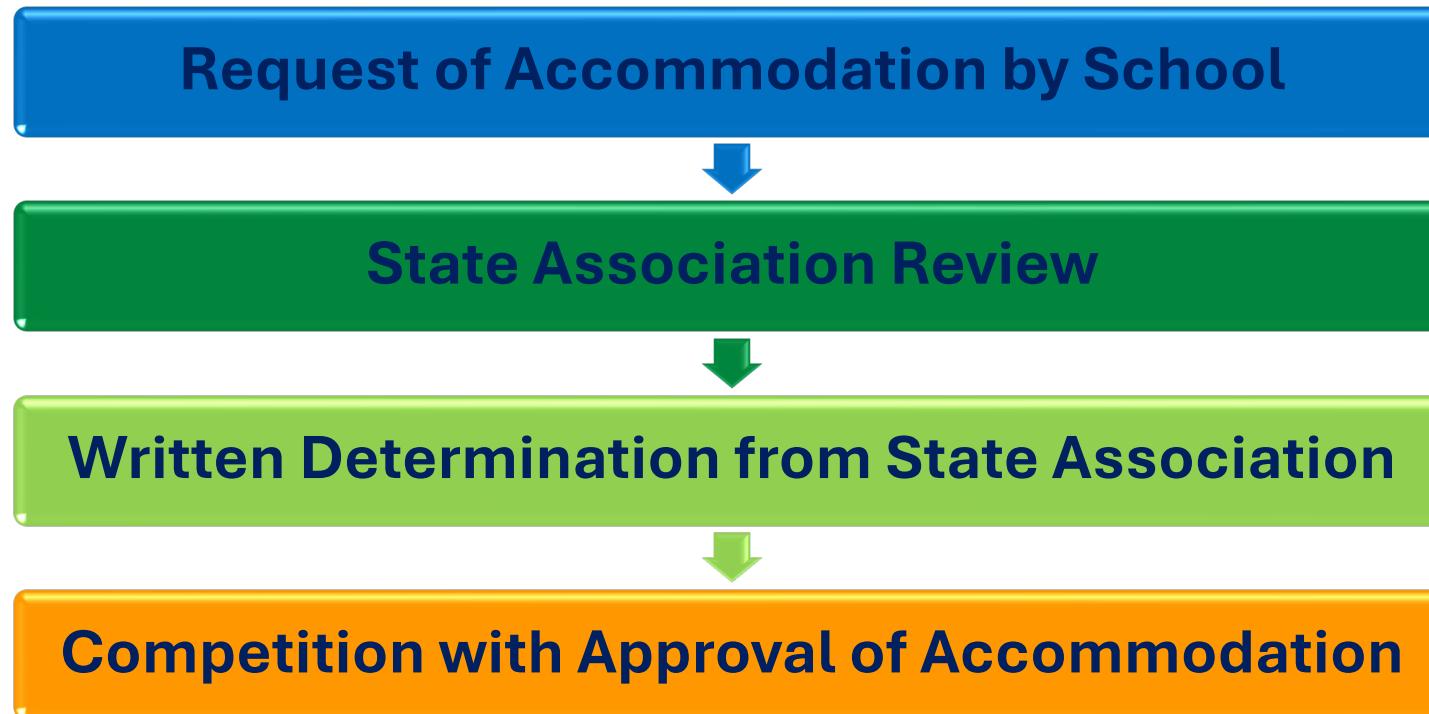




# NFHS Digital – Mobile App

- **Access via Mobile App:**
  - View available publications for sale
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# Guidelines for schools and state associations for consideration of accommodations



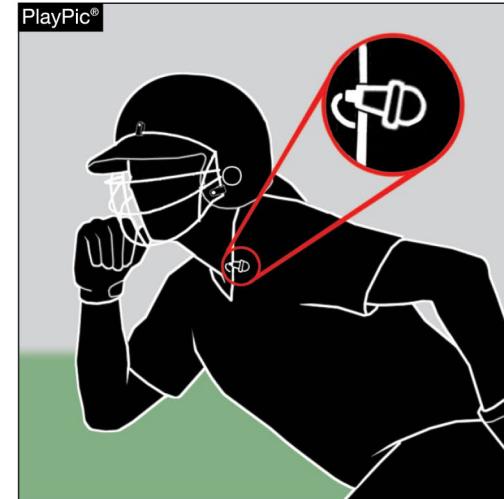
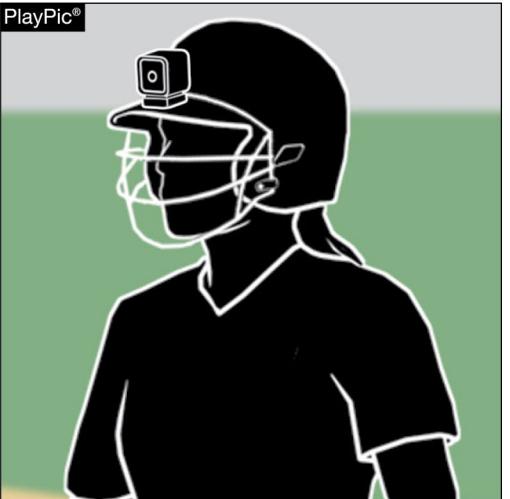


# 2026 NFHS SOFTBALL RULES CHANGES

# OTHER EQUIPMENT

## 1-9-6

- Players shall not transmit or record audio or video from the playing surface.
- Penalty: Ejection of the offender from the game, unless the offense is judged to be of a minor nature. If minor, the umpire may warn the offender and eject if the offense is repeated.





# BATTER-RUNNER AND RUNNER RULE 8

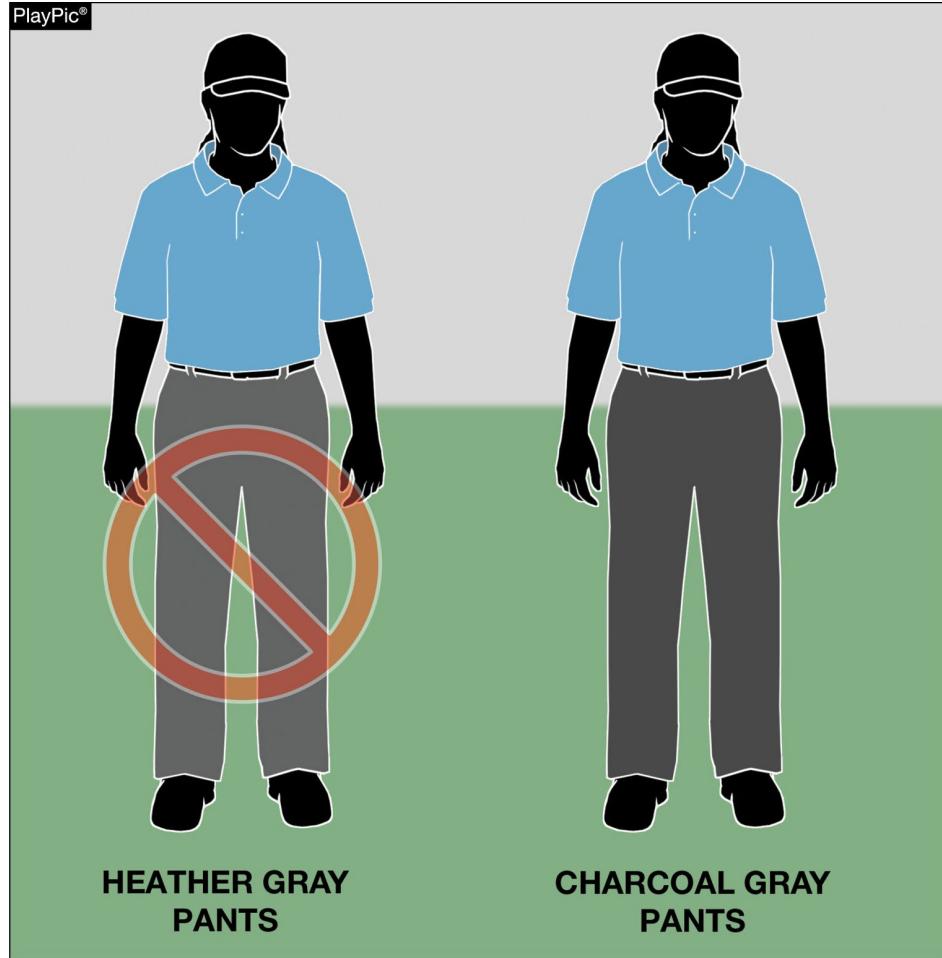
- NFHS Rule 8 has been reformatted for clarity and consistency.
- Section 4 was separated into two sections addressing runners entitled to advance with and without liability to be put out.
- Remaining sections were renumbered.



# EQUIPMENT AND APPAREL

## 10-4-2

- Umpires have the option of wearing heather gray, charcoal gray or navy blue slacks.
- Effective January 1, 2027, heather gray slacks will no longer be permitted as part of the umpire's uniform.





## 2026 NFHS SOFTBALL EDITORIAL CHANGES



# UNIFORMS, PLAYER EQUIPMENT 1-6 (NEW)

- Uniform language from Rule 3-2 has been moved to Rule 1-6 to align with other NFHS rules book language on equipment and uniform.
- Rule 1 Sections 6 through 8 have been renumbered to reflect this change.
- Rule 3 has been renumbered.



# FORFEITED GAME

## 4-3-2

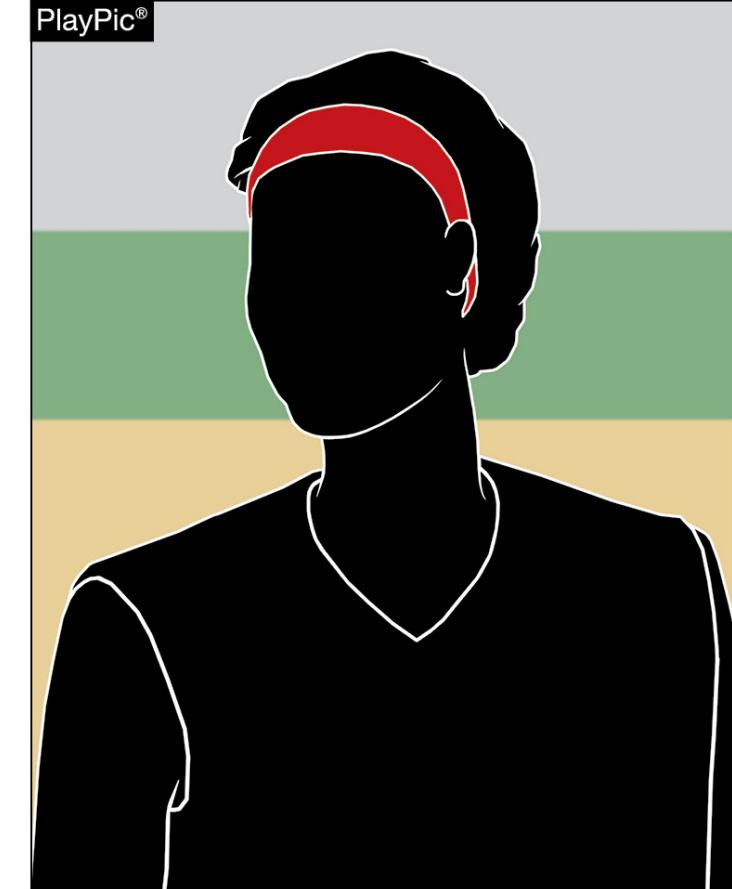
- If a game is forfeited after the number of innings required for a regulation game and the offending team is behind the score remains as recorded.

MechaniGram®

BALL	2	STRIKE	1	OUT	0		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	TOTAL
GUESTS	2	3	1	1			7
HOME	3	1	2				6

# UNIFORMS, PLAYER EQUIPMENT 3-2-5 CASE BOOK

- Edits to 3.2.5  
Situations B & C  
reflect rule  
change for 2025.
- There are no  
color restrictions  
for headbands.

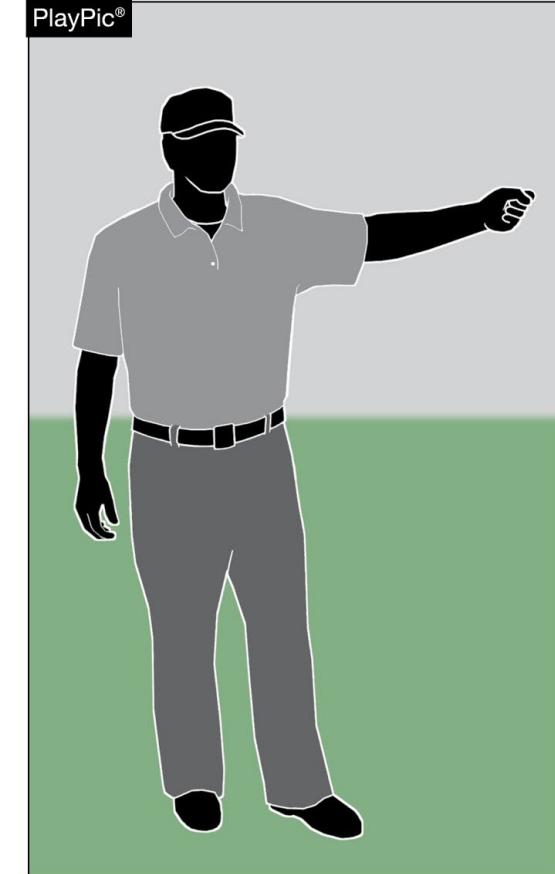




# 2026 NFHS SOFTBALL POINTS OF EMPHASIS

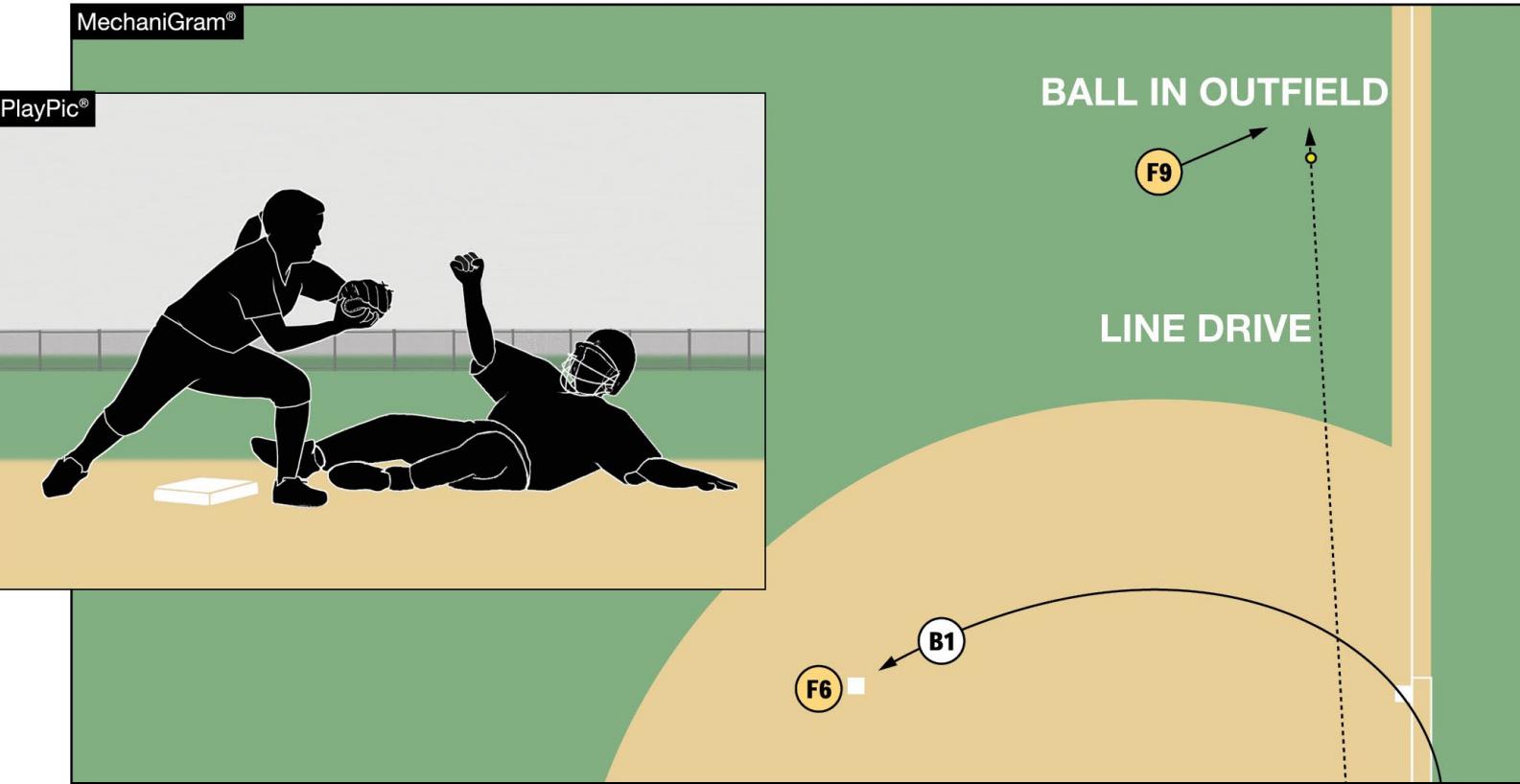
# OBSTRUCTION

- Obstruction is the act of a defensive team member that:
  - *hinders or impedes* a batter's attempt to make contact with a pitched ball, or
  - *impedes the progress* of a runner or batter-runner legally running the bases.



# OBSTRUCTION

- If the runner or batter-runner is not impeded, there is no obstruction.
- With the exception of a fake tag, as shown, a fielder's actions or positioning alone can never result in an obstruction ruling.



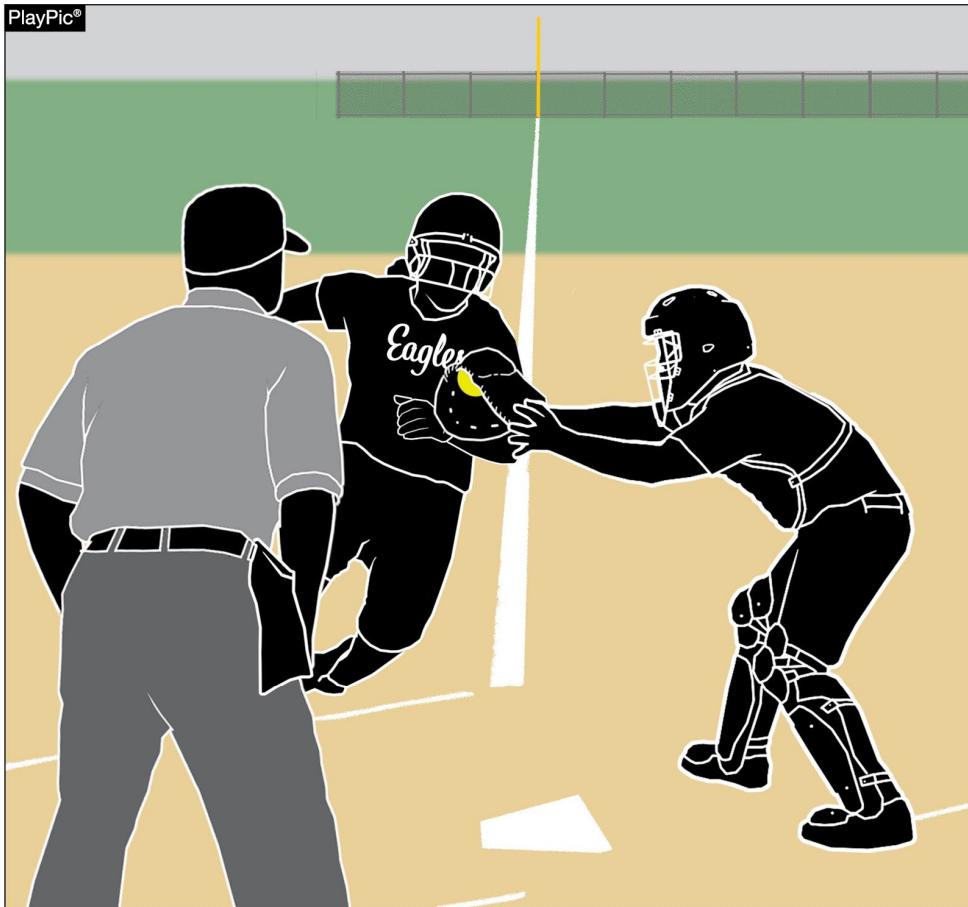


# OBSTRUCTION

- Impeding a runner means creating a negative effect on their ability to run the bases. This might include:
  - a runner slowing down
  - altering their intended path
  - stopping altogether
  - retreating to the previous base, or
  - making contact with a fielder that disrupts their movement
- The umpire must rely on judgment to determine both whether the runner was impeded and to what extent their progress was affected.

# MAINTAINING AN UNOBSTRUCTED VIEW

- Verbiage has been added to the 2026-28 NFHS Softball Umpire Manual to provide guidance to umpires when it is necessary to move from the primary position during a play.
- This movement allows umpires to keep the following items in view:
  - Defense contacting offense with the ball (tagging the runner).
  - Defense maintaining control of the ball during the tag.
  - Offense contacting the base.



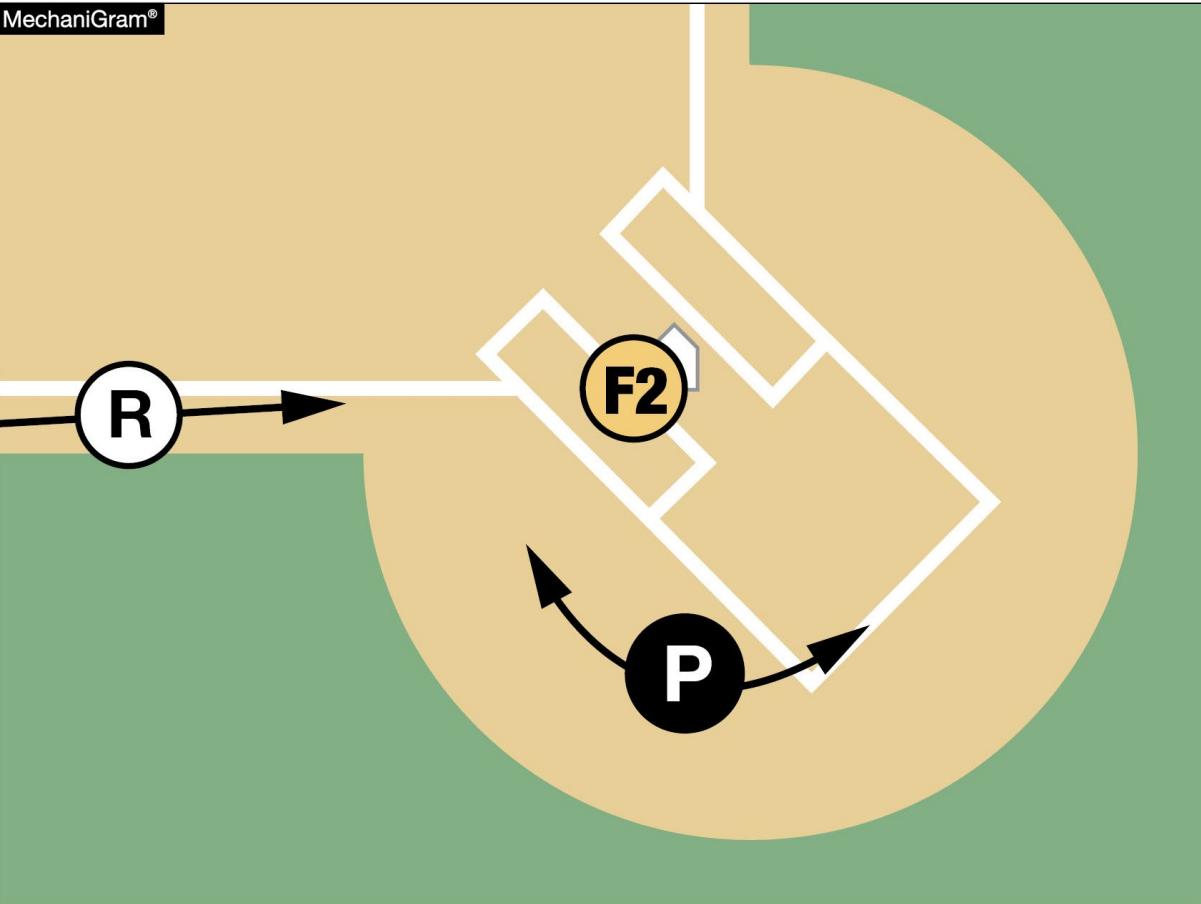
# MAINTAINING AN UNOBSTRUCTED VIEW

- Umpires must maintain proper distance while adjusting to keep all three interactions in view. Prior to umpires moving from their primary position, key elements of the play need to be understood. These include:
  - Fielder positioning.
  - Location, direction and height of the incoming throw.
  - Runner's path.
  - Timing of the throw and the runner arriving near the base.



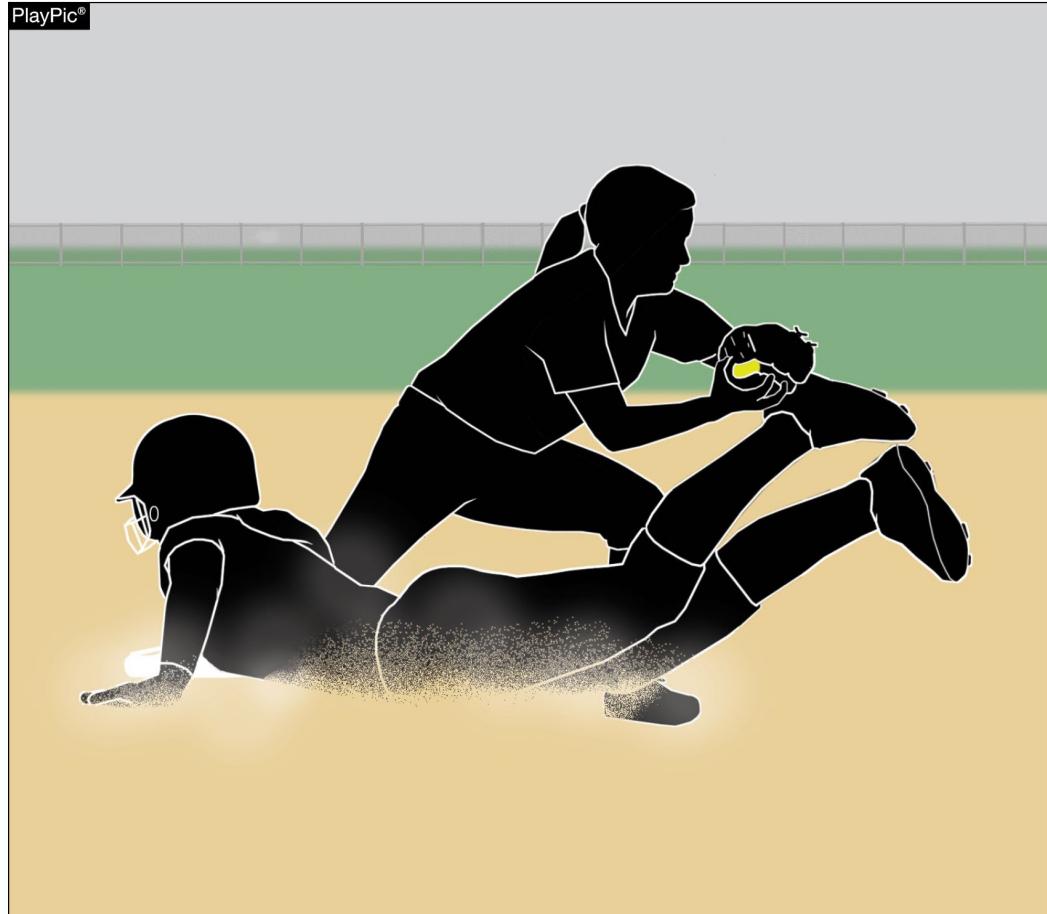
# MAINTAINING AN UNOBSTRUCTED VIEW

- On plays at the plate, the plate umpire should start with a primary position near the intersection of the back-left corner of the right-handed batter's box, as shown.
- Then the umpire should move left or right in order to maintain an unobstructed view of all the key interactions of the play.



# MAINTAINING AN UNOBSTRUCTED VIEW

- All of these elements must be understood prior to umpires adjusting their positioning.
- This is simply another example of an umpire requiring good timing in order to get calls correct.
- Reading the play correctly allows umpires to adjust their position in order to maintain a view of the play, instead of becoming straightlined.





## NFHS OFFICIALS EDUCATION

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# EXAM CENTER

NFHS | National Federation of State High School Associations

- 2024 Baseball Exam - Part 1
- 2024 Baseball Exam - Part 2
- 2023 Basketball Exam - Part 1
- 2023 Basketball Exam - Part 2
- 2023 Diving Exam - Part 1
- 2024-25 Diving ONLY Exam
- 2023 Field Hockey Exam - Part 1
- 2024-25 Field Hockey Exam
- 2023 Football Exam - Part 1
- 2024-25 Football Exam - Part 1
- 2023 Girls Gymnastics Exam - Part 1
- 2023 Girls Lacrosse Exam - Part 1
- AHSAA
- NFHS



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- Improved Exam Center

A photograph of a softball umpire in a white shirt and a dark protective mask, holding a dark softball in their right hand. They are standing next to a catcher, whose red helmet is visible in the foreground. The background is a solid blue.

# Umpiring Softball

Unit 1: Game Management

Unit 2: Obstruction

Unit 3: Interference



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*Sudden Cardiac  
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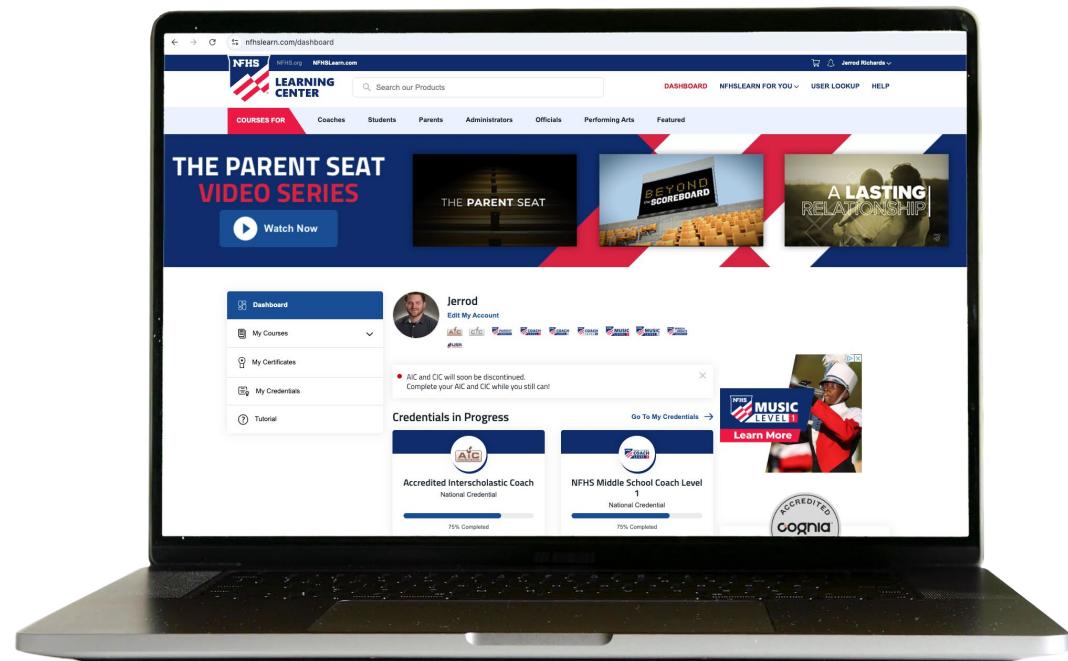


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- Concussion for Students – 1.8M+
- The Collapsed Student (2020) – 89,550+
- CPR & AED Training (2023) – 28,500+
- Sportsmanship – 1.3M+
- Fundamentals of Coaching – 1,000,000+
- First Aid, Health and Safety – 470,000+
- Bullying, Hazing and Inappropriate Behaviors – 561,000+
- Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention – 376,000+
- Protecting Students from Abuse – 400,000+
- Implicit Bias (2021) – 145,000+



# Coaching Softball



\$50

- Identify stages of the throwing motion and recognize the proper receiving body position
- Understand the mechanics of hitting, baserunning, leads and sliding
- Identify key elements of the swing including measures, phases and positions
- Recognize the starting positions and footwork for all players
- Identify defensive responsibilities and tactics for all positions



# NFHS NETWORK

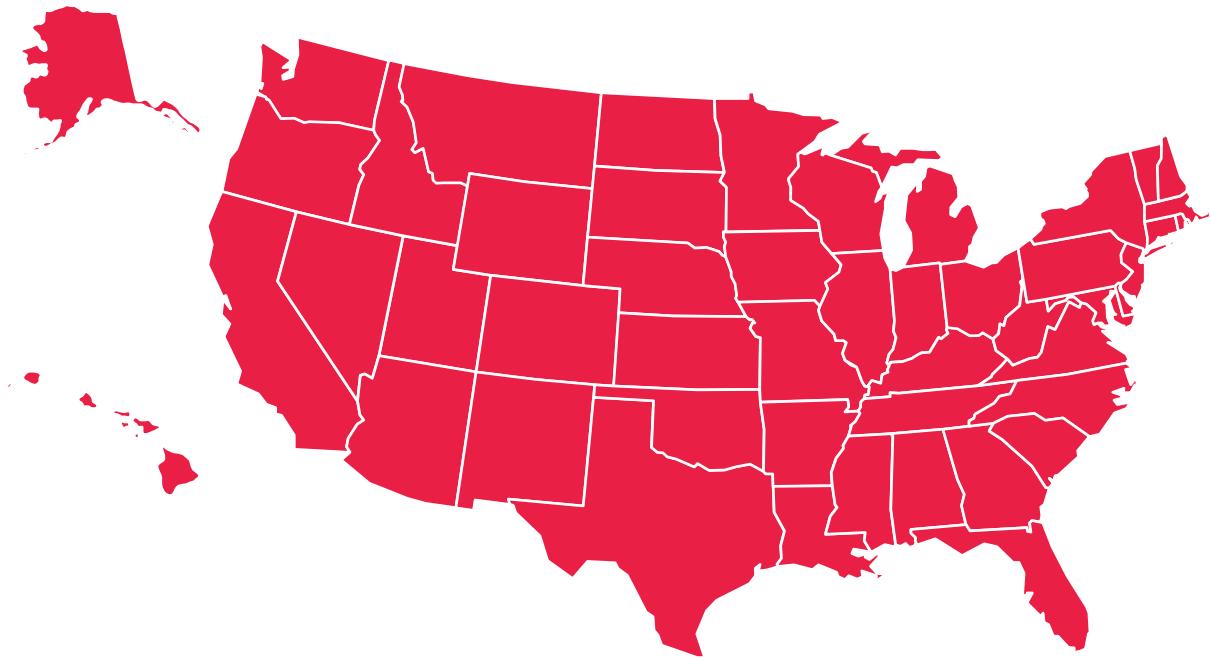


# NFHS Network

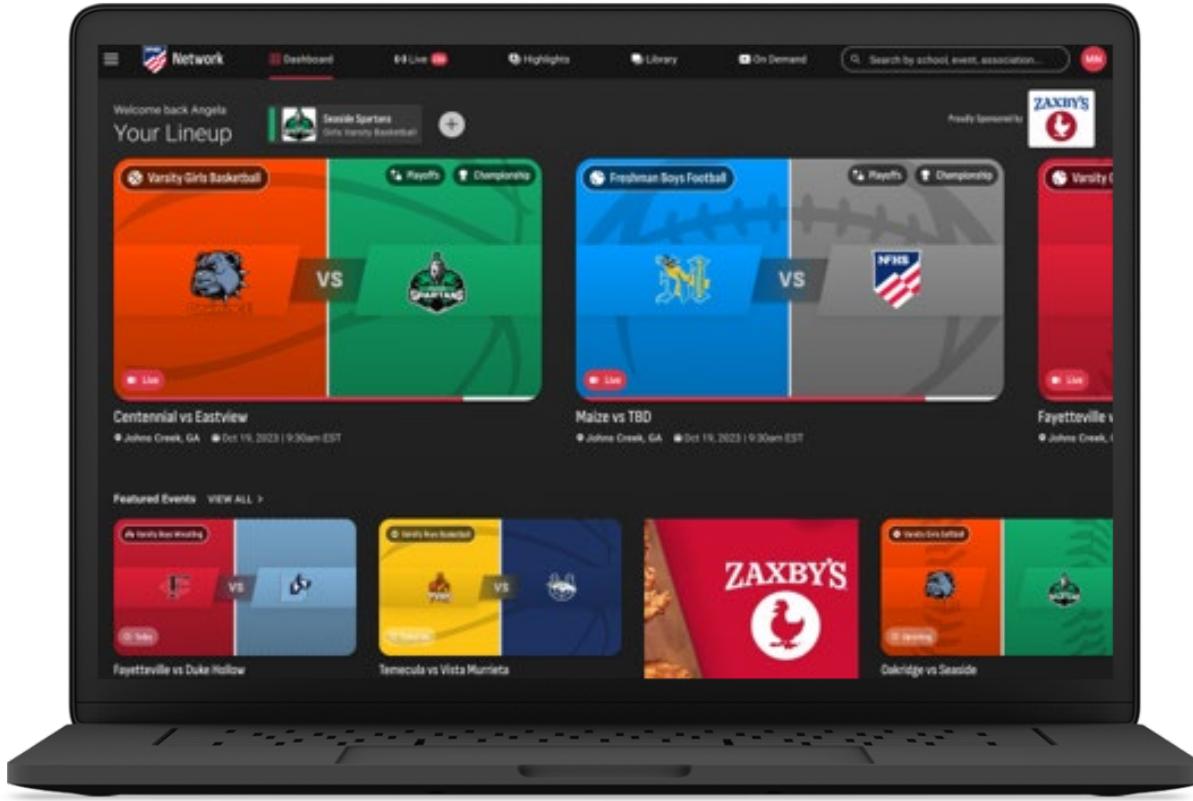
- 27 Different Sports and Activities.
- By 2028, every high school event in America will be streamed live.
- The NFHS Network will be **THE DESTINATION** for fans.

**[www.NFHSnetwork.com](http://www.NFHSnetwork.com)**

## OUR NETWORK



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**REVOLUTIONIZE THE FAN EXPERIENCE**

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# NFHS Authentication Mark Update



# NFHS Authenticating Mark Update



Old Logos

Current Logo



## Specifications

- Do not use the NFHS Authenticating Mark without prior written approval from the NFHS
- This mark is for use of licensees only.

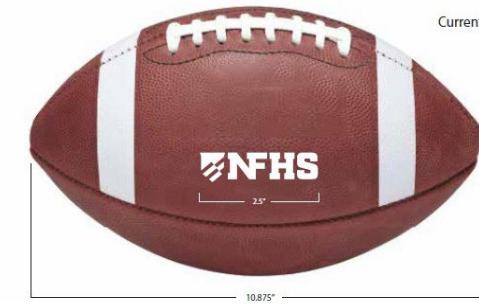
## Minimum size

- **Inflatable Balls** - 2  $\frac{1}{2}$ " in length (Basketball, Football, Soccer, Volleyball, and Water Polo)
- **Non-Inflatable Balls** - 1  $\frac{1}{4}$ " in length (Baseball, Field Hockey, Ice Hockey Puck, Lacrosse, and Softball)
- On a ball or puck, the NFHS mark may be smaller than manufacturer's logo, but should be placed in proximity to the manufacturer's name for easy identification. Allow enough space around the mark so it can be easily recognized as distinct and separate.
- Reproduce the mark only from the vector artwork provided on Direct Licensing Hub. Do not copy, scan art electronically or use as a template to redraw the symbol.

**Note:** If sizing or specifications do not work well in your particular design situation, contact K12 Licensing.



# NFHS Authenticating Mark Update



A current list of NFHS authenticated products can be found at [www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org), Resources, Authenticating Mark.



Alternative Size

1" THICK  
3" DIAMETER

# Softball



Old Size



circumference = 12"

Current Size



circumference = 12"

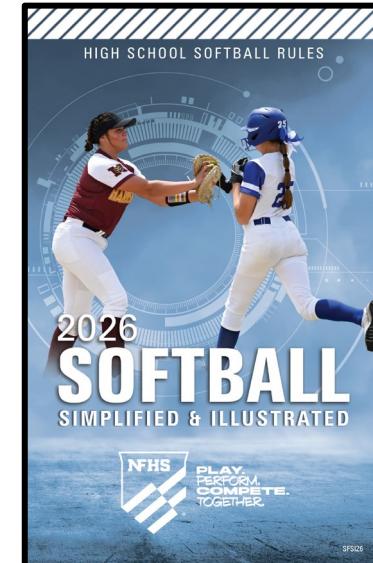
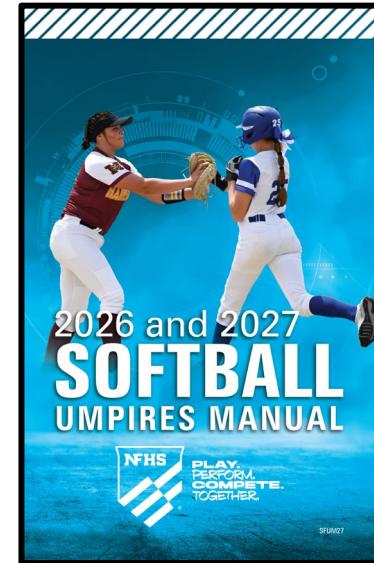
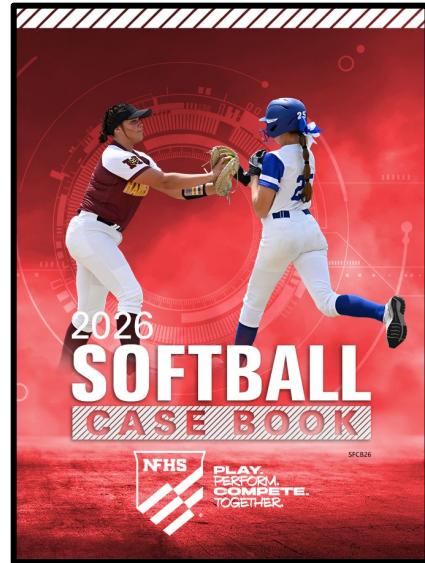
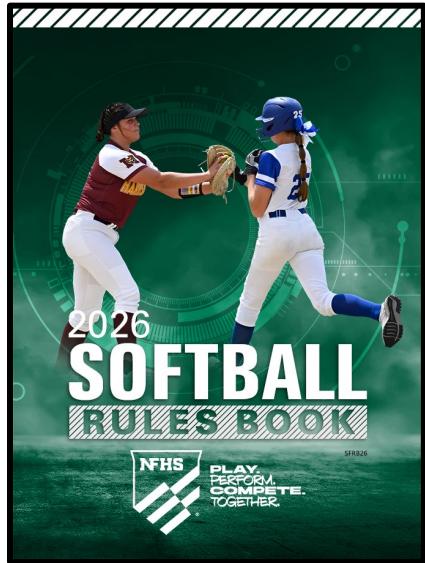


# 2026 NFHS SOFTBALL RESOURCES

# NFHS SOFTBALL PUBLICATIONS



- NFHS Rules Books, Case Books, and other Softball materials can be ordered online at [www.nfhs.com](http://www.nfhs.com), or by calling 1-800-776-3462.



# NFHS SOFTBALL PUBLICATIONS

The new NFHS Softball Pre-Season Guide will be available on or before November 1, 2025.



**2026 SOFTBALL PRESEASON GUIDE**

## A New Shade of Gray

**NFHS Adopts Charcoal Pants Among Rule Changes**

During its annual meeting June 15-17 in Indianapolis, the NFHS Softball Rules Committee recommended three rule changes, which were ultimately approved by the Board of Directors.

The three rule changes deal with umpire uniforms, electronic devices worn by players and a rewriting of Rule 8.

Here is a breakdown of the three rule changes.

**Equipment and Apparel (10-4-2)**

The most significant of the three rule changes involves changing the approved uniform for umpires. In the past, the approved colors for umpire pants were heather gray and navy.

The committee voted to approve the use of charcoal gray pants instead of heather gray. It is becoming more and more difficult to find heather gray pants as uniform manufacturers are no longer carrying that shade of gray, instead opting for charcoal gray in an effort to provide more sizes and styles within that color.

"Manufacturers have ceased production of heather gray umpire pants, and this update will help guide umpires toward selecting pant options

that are actively being produced and readily available," said Sandy Searcy, NFHS director of sports and liaison to the Softball Rules Committee.

The rule change takes effect with the 2027 season, as this allows umpires an opportunity to buy pants in the new gray shade. Navy pants will remain acceptable as well.

**Other Equipment (1-9-5)**

As technology continues to creep into the game, the rules committee adopted new language that prohibits players from transmitting or recording audio or video from the playing surface.

This change further clarifies the use of electronic devices and what is permitted after language was adopted last year to allow electronic communication for coaching purposes. The use of one-way communication devices from the dugout to the catcher while the team is on defense is still allowed. However, players are not permitted to wear devices, such as microphones or cameras, to record or transmit video or audio during the game.

"While increased media exposure has positively influenced the growth and visibility of softball, the committee determined that the potential risks

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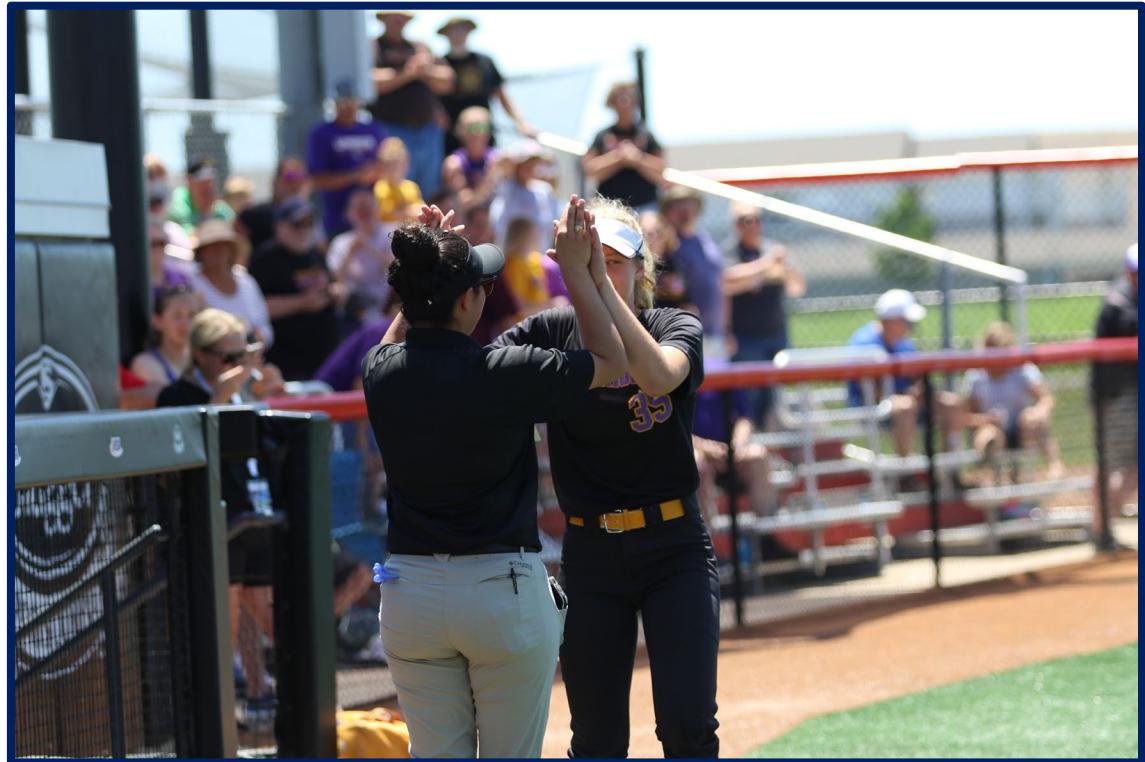
NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS (NFHS)





# NFHS SOFTBALL RESOURCES

- Video Exam Questions
- Rules Videos
- Softball General Survey
- Mid-Season Meetings
- Virtual Case Book





# NFHS SOFTBALL RESOURCES



- Weekly Rule Interpretations
- Softball Pitching Videos
- DP/FLEX Strategies for Coaches
- PowerPoints for Umpire Training
- Illegal Player Penalty Chart
- Uniform Rules
- Softball Field Diagram



PLAY.  
PERFORM.  
**COMPETE.**  
TOGETHER.

# Thank You

National Federation of State High School Associations

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