



# The Ground Rules

The monthly e-newsletter of the  
Amateur Baseball Umpires' Association

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## NFHS Rules Changes

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (June 22, 2004) - At its annual meeting in Indianapolis June 18-19, the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Baseball Rules Committee defined what is a balk and what is not for a high school baseball pitcher.

Rule 6-1-1 was revised to specify when a baseball pitcher can turn his shoulders toward base runners while on the mound. It is now legal for a pitcher to turn his shoulders to check a runner if he is in the set position and in contact with the pitcher's plate. However, if the pitcher turns his shoulders in the windup position to check a runner, it is a balk. Turning the shoulders after bringing the hands together during or after the stretch is also a balk.

"The use of the shoulder turn while in the set position does not afford the pitcher an advantage," said B. Elliot Hopkins, NFHS assistant director and liaison to the NFHS Baseball Rules Committee. "The prohibition of such actually creates a disadvantage."

In other changes, Rule 1-4-6 states that players now have the option of wearing batting helmets equipped with attached facemasks or guards. Regardless of whether the mask is produced with the helmet or attached after the helmet is manufactured, all attached facemasks or guards must meet NOCSAE standards at the time of the mask's attachment.

"NOCSAE recently developed a standard for facemasks and guards, and the committee felt it would be prudent to incorporate that new standard into our existing rule," said NFHS Baseball Rules Committee Chairman Greg Brewer.

The committee also modified rules pertaining to coaches uniforms. Rule 3-2-1 was changed to state that a coach who is not in his or her team's uniform shall be restricted to the bench or dugout and cannot enter the field unless one of his or her players is ill or injured. Along the same lines, any coach occupying the coach's box must be dressed in his or her team's uniform.

Also, Rule 3-1-1 was clarified so that if an illegal player on either offense or defense is discovered by an umpire, that player shall be restricted to the bench or dugout for the rest of the game. If an illegal offensive player re-enters the game, he will be called out immediately and ejected; an illegal defensive player will be ejected.

Baseball is the fourth-most popular sport among boys at the high school level with 453,792 participants during the 2002-03 season, according to the High School Athletics Participation Survey conducted by the NFHS. It also ranks third in school sponsorship with 14,988 schools offering the sport.

## Lightning Strikes

Essex County Judge James S. Rothschild Jr. has approved a \$2.6 million settlement in a trust for Krishan Thomas, a former student at Clifford Scott High School in East Orange who was severely injured when struck by lightning while playing center field in a baseball game against West Orange High School in 1999. He remains in a vegetative state. Thomas v. Boards of Education of West Orange and East Orange alleged the umpires were negligent by failing to protect the players by postponing or terminating the game. It is not known if the umpires had liability insurance but weather, as in this case, can be unpredictable and dangerous. This is why liability insurance is so important.

## Tip Of The Month

### Working the Plate.....

The best advice that I could give umpires is this: When I began my career, I thought that the last person to upset was the batter. This is completely wrong. The ump's best friend (other than your partner) is the catcher.

Never be small!

-- Dave Pellissire



One of the benefits of ABUA membership is a 10 percent discount for ordering from Honig's!

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### Mark Your Calendar!

#### ABUA - IBAF Umpire Camp

October 31 – November 6, 2004  
Ft. Lauderdale, FL

[Click here to view the brochure](#)

#### Cape Cod Umpire Camp

October 22 – 24, 2004  
Hyannis, MA

[Click here to get more information and register](#)

### Tell us what you want...

*Do you have a suggestion for a tip of the month?*

*Any exciting news to share?*

*Questions you want answered by the ABUA Board?*

Send Doug an email at [nyyank@comcast.net](mailto:nyyank@comcast.net) and we'll do our best to give you what you want!

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