



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

## NEWS RELEASE

### Jewelry Permitted in 2023 High School Softball Rules Changes

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Sandy Searcy

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (July 20, 2022) — The NFHS Softball Rules Committee has approved the wearing of jewelry in the sport, effective with the 2023 season. Previously, only medical and religious medals were permitted.

The removal of the previous Rule 3-2-12 from the 2022 NFHS Softball Rules Book headlined a set of six rules changes forwarded by the committee. The six proposed changes were compiled at the committee's recent rules meeting held June 13-15 at the Conrad Hotel in downtown Indianapolis and were subsequently approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

"The NFHS Softball Rules Committee has entertained this possible rule change on multiple occasions based on previous proposals submitted by the membership," said Sandy Searcy, NFHS director of sports and liaison to the NFHS Softball Rules Committee. "This year's overwhelming member response in favor of permitting the wearing of jewelry strongly influenced the Committee's decision to approve this proposal. Rule language, however, continues to allow umpires the authority to expel items they deem dangerous or distracting to any player."

In a causal change, Rule 3-6-11 strengthens language to emphasize that electronic devices only be used in the dugout during games to prevent teams from utilizing them as an on-field signaling system under the new jewelry-friendly regulations.

Color restrictions for gloves and mitts were also loosened as part of Rule 1-4-1. Previously, gloves and mitts could not consist of more than two colors excluding lacing and manufacturer's logos. For the 2023 season, there will be no limit on the number of colors as long as no part of the glove/mitt – including lacing and seams – is the same color as the ball; has markings that give the appearance of the ball; or is made in a manner that is distracting to the umpire.

To more accurately depict final scores and individual and team statistics, a new clause was added to Rule 4-2-1 stating that all baserunners involved in a game-ending home run will be scored and credited to the winning team. Previously, only the number of runs needed to win the contest were officially counted in the final score.

Rule 8-2-7, which deals with batter-runner interference, was reformatted to address the infraction in fair territory – “with a fielder attempting to make an initial play on a fair batted ball” (Rule 8-2-7a) – and in foul territory – “with a fielder attempting to field a fly ball over foul territory” (Rule 8-2-7b).

The final rule change for the 2023 season is the insertion of Rule 2-20-1g pertaining to the definition of a fair ball. This new language clarifies that a batted ball will be ruled a fair ball and a dead ball in the instance an offensive player interferes with a defensive player while the ball is in fair territory. Placing this language within the definition of a fair ball also makes it consistent with the definition of a foul ball that is covered in Rule 2-25-1e.

A complete listing of the softball rules changes will be available on the NFHS website at [www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org). Click on “Activities & Sports” at the top of the home page and select “Softball.”

According to the most recent NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey, fast-pitch softball is the fifth-most popular sport for girls with 362,038 participants in 15,877 high schools nationwide. The survey also indicated an additional 6,602 participants in slow-pitch softball.

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#### **About the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)**

The NFHS, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the national leadership organization for high school sports and performing arts activities. Since 1920, the NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and performing arts activities that help students succeed in their lives. The NFHS sets direction for the future by building awareness and support, improving the participation experience, establishing consistent standards and rules for competition, and helping those who oversee high school sports and activities. The NFHS writes playing rules for 17 sports for boys and girls at the



## 2023 NFHS SOFTBALL RULES CHANGES

**1-4-1:** Removes the number of color restrictions on a glove, including laces and seams, and does not allow any panels of the glove to match the color of the ball.

**Rationale:** Gloves and mitts are manufactured in variety of designs and multiple colors. As long as the color of the ball is not one of the colors used, does not have markings that give the appearance of the ball or are made in a manner that is judged distracting by the umpire it is permitted for use in NFHS Softball.

**2-20-1g:** A fair ball is a batted ball that while over fair territory, an offensive player interferes with a defensive player attempting to field a batted ball.

**Rationale:** The ball's status is determined at the point of interference. If an offensive player interferes with the defensive player while the ball is in fair territory, the ball is dead. Adding this language to the definition section mirrors the foul ball definition in Rule 2-25-1e.

**3-2-12, 3-6-11:** Removes language prohibiting the wearing of jewelry.

**Rationale:** Removing the language prohibiting jewelry places the softball rules in line with other NFHS sports that have removed the restriction. Umpires still have the authority to rule on anything that is considered a distraction or increases risk to any player.

**4-2-1:** Defines the protocol for when a fair batted ball clears the home run fence to end the game. All runs are allowed to score before the game is terminated.

**Rationale:** Allows for all runs to be counted when a fair batted ball clears the home run fence to end the game. All runs scored by virtue of the home run will be included in individual and team statistics.

**8-2-7:** New language clarifies batter-runner interference on a fly ball over foul territory.

**Rationale:** This has always been the enforcement but was not listed in the section covering batter-runner. The language is consistent with the rule covering interference on an initial play on a fair-batted ball and aligns with Rule 8-6-10.

## 2023 SOFTBALL EDITORIAL CHANGES

2-25-1e, 7-1-2 PENALTY 1, 7-4-1, 7-4-11, 8-1-1 EFFECTS 2, 8-4-3d

## 2023 SOFTBALL POINTS OF EMPHASIS

1. Time Between Innings
2. Jewelry and Electronic Communication
3. Sportsmanship
4. Comparable Drying Agents

high school level. Through its 50 member state associations and the District of Columbia, the NFHS reaches more than 19,500 high schools and 12 million participants in high school activity programs, including more than 7.9 million in high school sports. As the recognized national authority on interscholastic activity programs, the NFHS conducts national meetings; sanctions interstate events; offers online publications and services for high school coaches and officials; sponsors professional organizations for high school coaches, officials, speech and debate coaches, and music adjudicators; serves as the national source for interscholastic coach training; and serves as a national information resource of interscholastic athletics and activities. For more information, visit the NFHS website at [www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org).

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