



NEWS RELEASE

One-way Electronic Communications Allowed for Pitchers Under 2027 High School Softball Rules Changes

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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INDIANAPOLIS, IN (July 9, 2026) — Pitchers will now join catchers as the only players in high school softball permitted to receive one-way electronic communication from the dugout, effective with the 2027 season.

This change was one of four recommendations by the NFHS Softball Rules Committee during its June 14-16 meeting in Indianapolis. All recommendations were later approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

“Deliberations by the NFHS Softball Rules Committee were spirited and robust,” said Sandy Searcy, NFHS director of sports and liaison to the Softball Rules Committee. “Approval of these four rules proposals was the result of data collected from the membership, and specifically state association administrators. The committee is to be commended for its attention to detail, and thorough analysis of information available.”

Updated language now includes pitchers among the players permitted to receive one-way electronic communication from the dugout during games, allowing for faster delivery of information. The use of all other electronic devices to transmit or record information remains prohibited on the field of play, and players are still prohibited from transmitting or recording audio or video from the playing surface.

The committee also simplified language regarding whether a pitcher and catcher must face the first batter on defense in relation to courtesy runners. In its comments, the committee said the change

eliminates the requirement — or perceived requirement — that the pitcher and catcher listed on the starting lineup card must face the first batter on defense.

“Previously, there was a misconception that the pitcher and catcher listed on the lineup card were always required to face the first batter (one pitch), which was never the intent of the rule,” the committee noted. “This change simplifies the administration of the courtesy runner rule and eliminates a provision that applied only during the transition between the top and bottom halves of the first inning. By removing a unique scenario that applied only to the bottom of the first inning, the rule becomes easier for umpires, coaches, scorekeepers and players to administer and understand.”

Additional changes allow state associations to determine umpire uniforms and clarify the definition of an initial play to better align with other areas of the rules book.

“The committee was intentional in adopting changes that solve real issues encountered on high school softball fields,” said Andi Osters, chair of the NFHS Softball Rules Committee and assistant director of the Michigan High School Athletic Association. “Whether it’s improving communication between coaches and players, clarifying how interference should be judged after a deflected batted ball, streamlining the courtesy runner rule, or allowing states greater flexibility with umpire uniforms, each change reflects feedback from the coaches and officials who administer our game every day. Our objective is always to make the rules as clear, consistent and practical as possible.”

A complete listing of the softball rules changes will be available on the NFHS website at www.nfhs.org. Click on “Sports” at the top of the home page and select “Softball” and then “Rules.” The print version of the 2027 Softball Rules Book will be available for purchase in October at www.NFHS.com, and the digital version will be available in October via NFHS Digital at www.NFHS.org.

According to the 2024-25 NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey, a total of 338,315 girls participated in fast-pitch softball at 15,726 schools across the country, making it the fifth-most popular girls sport.

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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 18 sports for boys and girls at the high school level. Through its 50 member state associations and the District of Columbia, the NFHS reaches more than 19,800 high schools and 12 million participants in high school activity programs, including more than 8.2 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.

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