



2026 NFHS SOFTBALL RULES INTERPRETATIONS

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SITUATION 1: As the umpires are walking up the field, Team A's coach is preparing the team's one-way communication device for the game. The umpire notices that the system has 12 receivers that are a watch-like design. The umpire informs the coach that this device cannot be used since it is designed to communicate with multiple players and NFHS softball rules limit one-way communication to the catcher only. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. One-way communication to the catcher on defense is legal. There is no restriction to what type of device is utilized, or what that device is designed to or is capable of doing. The rule limits this one-way communication to the catcher only while on defense. Provided that only the catcher wears a receiver and receives one-way communication and this communication is only while the team is on defense, this would be legal. (1-9-6, 3-5-11)

SITUATION 2: As Team A takes the field, F1 is seen to be wearing a self-contained body camera attached to the uniform. Since this device is designed to be worn on the body and does not require operator attention to maintain its operation, the umpire rules this legal and allows F1 to wear the device and record during the game. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. No player shall transmit or record audio or video from the playing surface. This rule is regardless of what type of device is being used by the player or the amount of monitoring or attention the device requires. (1-9-6)

SITUATION 3: During the first inning, Team B's catcher is receiving pitch calls via one-way communication from the dugout. The visiting

coach brings it to the attention of the umpire that the catcher is then relaying the play call to the pitcher stating that this violates the rule that only the catcher may receive one-way communication from the dugout. The umpire rules that only the catcher is receiving one-way communication utilizing an electronic device, which is the only limitation of the rule. It is legal for the catcher to then communicate this information to the rest of the defense. **RULING:** Correct ruling. The only limitation on one-way communication from the dugout is specific to utilizing an electronic device. Only the catcher may use an electronic device to receive this communication and only while that team is on defense. Once this communication is received, the catcher may then communicate it to the rest of the defense through a verbal call or signal. (1-9-6)

SITUATION 4: During the sixth inning of a game, R1 rounds second base and is forced to alter their path to avoid F6 who is waiting on the throw from the outfield. The umpire verbalizes "obstruction" and signals a delayed dead ball. R1 continues toward third base and is thrown out by three steps. The umpire then verbalizes and signals "Dead ball" and awards R1 second base. R1's coach contends that R1 should be awarded third base since that is the base R1 was heading toward when the obstruction occurred. **RULING:** Since R1 had to alter their path due to F6's actions while F6 was not in possession of the ball nor in the act of making the initial play on a batted ball, obstruction was the proper call. There is no automatic award with obstruction. It is umpire judgment as to what base the runner would have reached had

there not been obstruction. When obstruction is ruled, the umpire judges what base the runner would have obtained had there not been obstruction. The "award" for obstruction is not designed to award or advance the runner because they were obstructed, it is designed to remove the negative impact that the obstruction had on the runner. It also protects the runner between the two bases where the runner was obstructed, and the runner cannot be put out between these two bases (with six exceptions). In this situation, when the runner is put out between the two bases where the obstruction occurred, the umpire rules a dead ball and awards the runner the base the runner would have reached had there not been obstruction. In the umpire's judgment, in this situation R1 would have obtained second base had there not been obstruction, so that is the base R1 is awarded. (8-5-2 PENALTIES 1)

SITUATION 5: B1 hits a deep base hit that gets past the outfielders rolling all the way to the fence. Rounding first base, B1 collides with F3 and both players fall to the ground. It takes some time for F3 and B1 to get untangled, and when B1 finally regains their feet the ball is on its way to second base. The umpire rules that although F3 obstructed B1, since B1 did not attempt to advance past first base, B1 cannot be advanced past first base. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. F3 obstructed R1 and at the time of the obstruction the umpire must judge what base that runner would have obtained had there not been obstruction. It is umpire judgment, but with the ball past the outfielders and B1 being knocked to the ground and taking a large amount of time to get

up, most umpires would judge that B1 would have obtained second or third base. If B1 had excellent speed and the fielders were playing up and were still a large distance from the ball when B1 was obstructed, the umpires might even judge B1 could have obtained home. Again, the award for

obstruction is solely based on umpire judgment and is intended not to punish the defense or advance the offense a predetermined number of bases. It is intended to remove the amount the runner was impeded by the defense. If the runner is only slightly impeded versus a situation like this where the

runner was impeded for an extended period of time, the award should be different as it is proportional to the amount the runner was impeded. In essence, the award for obstruction is intended to balance the scales and remove the amount the runner was impeded. (8-5-2 PENALTIES 3)