

Softball Points of Emphasis - 2023

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SPORTSMANSHIP

Good sporting behavior is one of the fundamental ingredients to the continued success and enjoyment of education-based high school sports and activities. In fact, in the 103-year history of organized high school sports in the United States, good sportsmanship has been one of the most important outcomes of high school activity programs. NFHS playing rules are written to encourage sportsmanship. Participation in these programs should promote respect, integrity, and sportsmanship. However, for these ideals to occur, everyone involved in these programs must be doing their part. The NFHS is concerned that unsporting behavior in education-based athletics has increased across all sports. As a result, the NFHS has made sportsmanship the No. 1 Point of Emphasis for the 2022-23 school year.

Sportsmanship, or good sporting behavior, is about treating one another with respect and exhibiting appropriate behavior. It is about being fair, honest, and caring. When these types of appropriate behavior occur, competitive play is more enjoyable for everyone. Coaches set the tone at athletic contests with their display of sportsmanship. If these individuals act in a sportsmanlike manner, their behavior sets the tone for players, spectators and others. If coaches, however, are complaining constantly about the decision of contest officials, spectators are more likely to do the same. There must be a collaborative, working relationship between contest officials and game administration to promote good sportsmanship and safely conduct the contest. Everyone has their role to play in creating a positive, sportsmanlike atmosphere at contests. Officials should focus on the actions of players, coaches and other bench/sideline personnel. A positive, open line of communication between officials and coaches ultimately results in a better contest for everyone involved. Contest officials, however, should never engage with spectators who are exhibiting unsporting behavior. Once the contest begins, school administration is responsible for dealing with unruly spectators. A proactive approach by school administration includes monitoring the behavior of spectators and intervening as needed. If spectators are using demeaning or profane language at officials – or at others in the stands – those individuals should be removed from the contest by school administration. In recent years, a heightened level of unsportsmanlike behavior has been occurring by spectators at high school sporting events, and it must be stopped. The use of demeaning language, or hate speech, by students, parents, and other fans must cease. High school sports and other activities exist to lift people up, not demean or tear people down. The goal is to treat everyone

fairly and treat each other with respect. Any speech or harassment that is insulting, demeaning, or hurtful will not be tolerated. High schools must establish a culture that values the worth of every single person – both players on the school's team and players on the opposing team. There must be a no-tolerance policy regarding behavior that shows disrespect for another individual. Good sports win with humility, lose with grace and do both with dignity. It takes the efforts of everyone every day to ensure that sportsmanship remains one of the top priorities in education-based activity programs.

TIME BETWEEN INNINGS

As a point of emphasis, umpires and coaches should pay strict attention to the 60-second time limit between half-innings. In accordance with Rule 6-2-5, at the beginning of each half-inning, no more than one minute may be used to deliver no more than five pitches to the catcher or other teammate. The one-minute time limit begins from the third out of the previous half-inning. A pitcher returning to the pitching position in the same half-inning will not be granted any warm-up pitches. Umpires may authorize more pitches during inclement weather or if a pitcher was removed due to injury or by rule.

JEWELRY AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

The rule prohibiting jewelry has been removed, allowing team personnel to now wear jewelry; however, the rule regarding the use of electronics is still in place. The use of electronic devices by team personnel to transmit or record information pertaining to their players or team's performance is only permitted within the dugout. Items such as smartwatches are permitted to be utilized as a watch but cannot be used to transmit or receive data outside of the dugout.

COMPARABLE DRYING AGENTS

Pitchers are not permitted to use any substance on the ball or on contact points of the pitching hand or fingers; also, no foreign substances may be applied to the ball. If a pitcher licks the fingers, the player must wipe the fingers prior to touching the ball. Comparable drying agents listed on the USA website (USAsoftball.org) are permitted, and powdered rosin is also permitted. It is not necessary to wipe off the drying agent before making contact with the ball.