

Baseball Points of Emphasis – 2017

By NFHS on November 22, 2016 [baseball](#)

The NFHS Baseball Rules Committee and the NFHS Board of Directors believe there are areas of the game of interscholastic baseball that need to be addressed and given special attention. These areas of concern are often cyclical, some areas need more attention than others, and that is why they might appear in the rules book for consecutive editions. These concerns are identified as “Points of Emphasis.” For the 2017 high school baseball season, attention is being called to: correct use of NFHS Authenticated Mark Program baseballs, umpires asking assistance from his partner on a call, positioning of team personnel and legal slides. When a topic is included in the Points of Emphasis, these topics are important enough to reinforce throughout the academic year because they are not being given the proper attention.

NFHS AUTHENTICATING MARK PROGRAM (AMP)

The NFHS AMP program was designed in 2000 to ensure that the equipment used in interscholastic contests is manufactured consistently and meets certain physical requirements. By using conforming equipment, players, coaches and officials can rest assured that the baseballs used are designed for the age group for which playing rules are written for interscholastic competition. All such balls are required to display the NFHS Authenticating Mark. Manufacturers make balls to our standards and expect that their products are purchased for game competition. Using non-AMP balls puts players, coaches, fans and umpires at risk of injury and in consistent playability which hurts high school baseball. Using baseballs that meet the AMP requirements are good for our young people and even better for our game.

UMPIRE ASKING ASSISTANCE FROM HIS PARTNER

Often during contests, a coach will request that an umpire seek assistance from his partner for a particular call or play situation. Asking assistance from a partner is not mandatory. It is the discretion of the plate umpire if he feels that his view was obstructed or that his partner had a better angle on the play. If he does feel that his partner’s perspective will provide additional input to his final decision, then he has the flexibility to request his partner’s help. Once the opinion is shared, it is the plate umpire who will make the final determination on the call or play. This entire exchange will be quick and intentional using umpire signals that are relayed to players, coaches and spectators.

LOCATION OF TEAM PERSONNEL

Coaches, players, substitutes, attendants or other bench personnel shall not leave the dugout during live ball for any unauthorized purpose. Coaches or team personnel may not sit outside the dugout/bench on buckets or stools. Players are not allowed to stand or kneel outside their dugout/bench and make “cat-calls” or any other disparaging remarks while the other team is taking infield practice. This is unsportsmanlike behavior and will not be tolerated in interscholastic baseball. Umpires and coaches need to work together for the benefit of the students they officiate and teach. It is these game situations that provide coaches and umpires excellent “teachable moments” to reinforce proper behavior and perspective. The positive values that are learned at the baseball diamond will serve the young people long after their high school careers have ended.

LEGAL SLIDES

There has been a misnomer that on any given play the base runner has to slide into the base he is trying to acquire. Even the universally accepted “force play slide” is misconstrued as the player having to slide into the base. NFHS rules are specific and very clear – runners are never required to slide. However, if they choose to slide then the slide must be legal. A player can legally slide either feet first or head first. If a player chooses feet first, then at least one leg and buttock shall stay in contact with the ground. A slide is illegal if the runner uses a rolling, cross-body or pop-up slide, into the fielder, or if the runner’s raised leg is higher than the fielder’s knee (while he is in a standing position), if the runner goes beyond the base and then makes contact with the fielder or alters his play, if the runner slashes or kicks the fielder, if the runner intentionally tries to injure the fielder and during a force play situation, the runner does not slide on the ground and in a direct line between the two bases. When a runner slides, he must slide within reach of the base with either hand or a foot. The consequence is that the runner is called out and based upon his actions there could possibly be malicious contact and the runner would be ejected from the game. Attention to when it is appropriate to slide and to do it legally will improve the overall process of baserunning, reduce unnecessary injuries to the runner and the covering fielder, and make for a more exciting game to watch and enjoy.