



March 7, 2022

## NFHS Softball Weekly Rule Interpretations

**SITUATION 1:** In the first inning, the offensive coach notices that the other team's pitcher is placing a hand into a back pocket before a number of pitches and then going directly to the ball. In (a), the plate umpire asks the pitcher and is informed that the pitcher is using a drying agent that is comparable to powdered rosin. The umpire inspects the ball and finds no discoloration and that no material has been transferred to the ball. In (b), later in the third inning a foul ball has been returned to the plate umpire who notices that the ball is discolored, and a tacky substance has been transferred to the ball. **RULING:** Legal in (a), drying agents comparable to powdered rosin and designed for use in softball are permissible and by rule do not require the player to wipe off the hand before making contact with the ball. In (b), comparable drying agents are allowable unless they discolor and/or transfer material to the ball. Once the umpire notices discoloration or material that has been transferred to the ball from the drying agent being used, this material is no longer permitted (6-2-2). **COMMENT:** These products are designed to dry the player's hand without transferring material that would result in the ball becoming discolored or making it "tacky". It is impossible for an umpire on the field to determine the exact makeup of drying agents being used by the pitcher during a softball game, or for them to determine if the product has been altered from its original design/chemical makeup. Drying agents are allowed to be used unless/until it is noted that they have discolored the ball or transferred material onto the ball. If either of these conditions are noted at any point during the game, their use will no longer be permitted. If the player has another drying agent (a different towel with the product) that new product can be utilized provided there is no discoloration or material transferred to the ball while using that new item.

**SITUATION 2:** With R1 on first base and no outs, B2 swings and misses strike three. As B2 is crossing in front of the plate returning to the first base dugout: (a) R1 is returning to first base and F2's return throw to F1 hits B2's helmet and the ball ricochets away from F1 but stays in play. In (b) F2 is throwing to second base to make a play on R1 who was stealing on the pitch when the throw hits B2's helmet and the ball ricochets toward first base. **RULING:** In (a), although B2 was hit with F2's throw there was no interference on this play. In order to have interference in this situation there must be a play being made on another runner as listed in 8-6-16c. Since R1 was not stealing and F2's throw was intended to return the ball to F1, there was no play to interfere with. In this case, a dead ball is called, R1 remains at first base and the ball is returned to the pitcher. There are other situations in the rules book that parallel this play where it is interference if there is a play being made, but simply a dead ball and runners return to last base touched if no play is obvious. These rules include interference by an on-deck batter (7-4-4) and a blocked ball caused by offensive equipment (8-6-15). In (b) F2 was making a play on R1 attempting to steal second base. This is interference by a retired player, the ball is dead and the runner closest to home, R1 in this case, is declared out. (7-4-4 PENALTIES 1; 8-6-15; 8-6-16c)

**SITUATION 3:** With no outs and no runners on base B1 hits a ball toward F6. B1 beats F6's throw to F3 but fails to touch first base as they overrun the base. **RULING:** The base umpire should signal and verbalize safe. The umpire's first responsibility is to rule on the play at first base and since the batter-runner was not legally put out prior to reaching first base, they should signal and verbalize safe. Once a runner passes a base, they are considered to have touched that base until properly appealed. If the defense properly appeals B1 missing first base prior to them returning to first base, the umpire would then rule on this appeal and call B1 out. (2-1-10; 8-2-2)