

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Elliot Hopkins

INDIANAPOLIS (July 18, 2006) — Effective with the 2007 high school baseball season, a team playing with fewer than nine players may return to nine players. In addition to this change, 12 other rules revisions were approved by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Baseball Rules Committee at its June 16-17 meeting in Indianapolis. These rules changes subsequently were approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

“Rule 4-4-1f allows a team that had to drop down to eight players to return to nine later during the game,” said Greg Brewer, assistant director of the Alabama High School Athletic Association and chairperson of the NFHS Baseball Rules Committee. “This will also help promote participation.”

Rule 3-3-1n addresses revised penalties for initiating malicious contact on offense or defense. Transgressions will now result in the ball being immediately dead, and if on offense, the player is ejected and declared out, unless he has already scored. If the defense commits the malicious contact, the player is ejected; the umpire shall rule either safe or out on the play and award the runner(s) the appropriate base(s) he felt they would have obtained if the malicious contact had not occurred.

Other rules pertaining to malicious contact were also revised, as were their corresponding entries in the base-running table and dead-ball table.

“With these changes, we hope to be more definitive on offensive and defensive malicious contact,” said Elliot Hopkins, NFHS assistant director and liaison to the Baseball Rules Committee.

In another change, Rule 6-2-1 now states that a ball will be called each time a pitcher brings his pitching hand in contact with his mouth, either without distinctly wiping off the pitching hand before it touches the ball or while in contact with the pitcher’s plate.

Rule 3-2-1 was revised to state that one player or coach may occupy each coach’s box while his team is at bat. A coach or player occupying the coach’s box shall remain in the box from the time the batter enters the batter’s box until the release of the ball by the pitcher. If the coach or player steps out of the box during this time, regardless of who violates the rule, the head coach will be restricted to the bench/dugout.

“A player or coach standing outside the box gains an unfair advantage as to where the opposing pitcher intends to pitch the ball,” Hopkins said. “The box-bound player or coach does not have the same angle or disadvantage. This rule seeks to correct these unfair advantages and prevent distractions the pitcher may experience during his delivery.”

Another rule change (Rule 3-3-4) stipulates that whenever team members are loosening

up in an area that is not protected by a fence or other structure, another member of the team with a glove must be positioned between them and the batter to protect them from a batted or thrown ball.

“This is a risk minimization initiative to protect individuals who are not watching the activity in the field,” Hopkins said.

In another effort to minimize risk, Rule 10-2-1 was revised to specify that when behind the plate, the umpire-in-chief shall wear proper safety equipment including, but not limited to chest protector, face mask, throat guard, plate shoes, shin guards and protective cup (if male).

A new signal was adopted that uses the point motion for the start of the game. This will align NFHS officials with other rules codes to begin a contest and put a ball back in play.

In an effort to make baseball compatible with other NFHS sport rules, Rule 1-4-4 now states that a commemorative or memorial patch, not to exceed 4 square inches, may be worn on jerseys without compromising the integrity of the uniform.

In addition to the rules changes, the committee identified Points of Emphasis for the 2007 season. Among those are malicious contact, concussions, good sporting behavior, face protection, umpire’s professionalism, non-adult bat/ball shaggers and game management.

Baseball is the fourth-most popular sport among boys at the high school level with 459,717 participants during the 2004-05 season, according to the High School Athletics Participation Survey conducted by the NFHS. It also ranks third in school sponsorship across the nation.