



May 12, 2025

NFHS Softball Weekly Rule Interpretations

Situation 1: In the first inning Team A is at bat. When F2 bats and reaches base safely Team A's coach requests time to have #17 courtesy run for F2 (#9). In the fourth inning #9 is now playing F7. With #21(F3) on second base and #9(F9) on first base, Team A's coach requests time and as the coach is walking toward the umpire they yell to their dugout "#17 your running". Coach then tells the umpire "#17 is going to run for #21 as a pinch runner". As the coach and umpire are discussing the substitution, #17 thinking they are running for #9 again, replaces #9 at first base and #9 enters the dugout. As Team A's coach walks away from the discussion with the umpire, they realize that #9 replaced the wrong player and corrects the error having #17 replace #21 and #9 return to first base. Team B's coach insists that #9 should be ruled out as they entered dead ball territory, abandoning their base. The umpire rules that the ball was dead when the incorrect replacement occurred, Team A corrected the error prior to the ball being made live so there is no infraction. **RULING:** Correct ruling by the umpire. A runner abandoning their base applies when the ball is live, and the runner enters dead ball territory. Also had the ball been made live with #17 on first base and #21 still on second base this would have resulted in two outs. The first for #9 abandoning their base by entering dead ball territory and the second for an illegal substitution as #21 and their substitute #17 would have been in the game at the same time. (3-3-5, 3-4-1a&c, 8-6-19)

Situation 2: Team A's home field has bullpen areas down the foul lines. This area is built outside of the normal line of the fence, extending farther away from the field. The area is separated by a yellow line that runs the length of the bullpen area and in line with the fence that separates playable area from non-playable area. During discussions with the coach about ground rules the coach informs the umpire that they play that area as non-playable if there would be a fly ball entering the area, but playable for ground balls or an overthrow that enters the area. The umpire informs the coach this is not an acceptable ground rule as a ground rule cannot supersede a book rule. NFHS Softball Rules require an area to either be live ball or dead ball territory and cannot change based on the type of ball that enters the area. This area is determined to be dead ball territory in all cases for this game. **RULING:** Correct ruling by the umpire. As defined in the rule book an area is to be considered live ball or dead ball territory, not dependent on any other factors. A few years ago, the media area was considered live ball territory if it was not occupied and dead ball territory if it was occupied. This rule was changed to ensure any area designated as dead ball territory under any condition, is dead ball territory under all conditions during the game. This same ruling should be applied to ground rules and areas shall be defined as live ball or dead ball territory in all cases. (2-21-4, 4-1-3)

Situation 3: B1 from Team A squares to bunt and the pitch enters the batter's box and makes contact with B1. The umpire rules B1 is hit by the pitch and awards them first base. Team B's coach requests for the umpire to check with their partner as they feel that B1 did not withdraw their bat and the proper ruling should be a dead ball strike. The umpires get together and rule that the batter did withdraw their bat and the hit by pitch ruling will stand. **RULING:** Correct ruling by the umpire. Whether a batter swings at a pitch or attempts to bunt a pitch is umpire judgement. In this case as defined in rule 2-8-2 if the

batter holds the bat in the strike zone it is considered a bunt attempt and a strike should be called. If the batter is hit by a pitch that is ruled a strike, the ball is dead and a strike is added to the batter's count if it is strike three the batter is out. However, in this case if the umpires rule that the batter's actions do not result in a strike (did not swing nor attempted to bunt) then hit by pitch and awarding the batter first base is the proper ruling. (2-8-2, 8-1-2b)