**2020 NFHS SOFTBALL POINTS OF EMPHASIS**:

Bat Certification Marks and USA Softball Non-Approved Bats with Certification Marks The NFHS Softball Rules Committee made the determination that clarification was needed to ensure each batter comes to the plate with a bat displaying the proper certification mark making it legal for use in high school play. Bat manufacturers produce several models of bats for multiple organizations. These different models are often custom designed to meet the specific organizations’ individual certification requirements. Bats that are custom designed for one organization may only bear that organization’s certification mark. Conversely, a large number of these bats are designed to meet several organizations’ requirements and will bear multiple organizations certifications marks - making them legal to use in multiple codes. What is important to know is that NFHS Softball recognizes and utilizes USA Softball’s certification process. In order for a bat to be legal for use in NFHS softball it must be marked with the ASA 2000, 2004 or the USA Softball All-Games Certification Mark. Additionally, any bat with one of these certification marks must not appear on the list of the USA Softball Non-Approved Bats with Certification Marks. This list was created as a way to alert players and coaches that a bat that was once approved for use has now been deemed no longer approved for use. All bats that are approved by USA Softball, formally ASA, for use in fast pitch play shall bear one of the markings shown below. Once these bats have entered the market and possible issues arise, there is a process for revoking the approval of these bats. When it has been determined that a bat should have its approval revoked, either through the re-testing process or for a voluntary removal from the manufacturer, the bat is added to the Non-Approved Bats list with Certification Marks. These bats were approved when originally manufactured and were legal for play at that time, but due to some unforeseen issues no longer pass the approval requirements. Inspection of Equipment It is the head coach’s responsibility to make certain all players are legally and properly equipped, which includes checking bats, helmets and catcher’s gear prior to every contest. Although umpires may inspect equipment, they are no longer required to do so. What is important to remember is equipment wears during use. Bats can become damaged, or a player may purchase a new bat that does not meet the NFHS requirements. Both catchers’ helmets as well as batter’s helmets have screws that hold face guards in place. These screws loosen and will eventually fall out rendering the equipment illegal for use and potentially causing a safety risk to the player if not detected. It is critical that coaches remain vigilant in inspecting equipment before every contest to ensure no damage has occurred or new noncompliant equipment has been purchased since their last inspection. Damaged Bat vs Illegal Bat Penalty Clarification was needed to delineate the difference between a player using a bat that is damaged versus a bat that is illegal for high school play. By definition, a bat that is damaged (Rule 2-4-3c) is removed from the game without penalty (7-4-2 NOTE). An illegal bat that is nonapproved or altered will continue to result in the head coach and the batter being ejected.

Contact with the Pitcher’s Plate Due to the varying levels of play and levels of skill in pitching development, prior to the start of the pitch, NFHS rules allow the pitcher to choose foot placement. The pitcher may choose to take a position with the pivot foot in contact with the plate and the non-pivot foot behind the pitcher’s plate or both feet in contact with the pitcher’s plate. Prior to the start of delivery, both feet must be on the ground within or partially within the 24-inch length of the pitcher’s plate. This allows for personal preference and developing pitchers to work through levels of progression.

**2020 NFHS SOFTBALL RULES CHANGES**

**1-5-1e, 2-4, 2-4-3, 7-4-2 PENALTY NOTE:** Damaged bats are defined.    
**Rationale:** Clarifies that a damaged bat is removed from the game without penalty.

**6-1-1:** Prior to starting the delivery (pitch), the pitcher shall take a position with the pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate.  
**Rationale:** Clarifies that the pivot foot must be in contact with the pitcher’s plate, rather than on the top surface of the pitcher’s plate.

**9-1-1 EXCEPTION c:** A run is not scored if the runner advances to home plate during action in which the third out is made by the preceding runner who is declared out on an appeal play**.  
Rationale:** Clarifies that on any appeal play, a run is not scored if the third out is made by a preceding runner.

**2020 SOFTBALL MAJOR EDITORIAL CHANGES**

**1-1-7:** Clarifies that game managementor a state administrator may establish a dead-ball media area within the confines of the field, but that area will remain a dead ball area throughout the game.    
 **1-5-1d:** Updates to add the new USA Softball All Games certification mark.    
  
**8-4-3d PENALTY:** Clarifies that the batter-runner, not the batter is awarded bases when a fielder intentionally contacts the ball with detached equipment.

**2020 SOFTBALL EDITORIAL CHANGES**

1-2-3, 2-22-4, 2-57-3, 3-4-1c, 7-1-2 PENALTY 2

**COMMENTS ON THE 2020 NFHS SOFTBALL RULE CHANGES** 1-5-1c, d, e, 2-4-3, 7-4-2 -

Added language to give a clear definition of a damaged bat separating it from illegal and altered bats. Damaged bats are not to be considered illegal bats, therefore they do not carry the same penalty as illegal bats. Damaged bats should be removed from the game without penalty.

Language added additional certification marking (USA Softball All Games mark) to update current legal marks. 6-1-1 - Clarifies that any part of the pivot foot is in contact with the pitcher’s plate is legal and no longer limits the pivot foot to contacting just the top surface of the pitcher’s plate, which reflects current practice.

9-1-1 EXCEPTION c - Added language to make clear that if a preceding runner is called out on appeal, subsequent runner(s) that cross the plate do not count as run(s) scored.

**REVIEW OF 2019 RULES CHANGES**:

1-1-7, 2-22-4, Table 5-1, 5-1-1o: The media shall be prohibited from being in live-ball area. The

home team or game management may designate an area for the media in dead ball territory.

Rationale: Clarifies that game management may designate a media area in dead ball territory.

Overridden by IGHSAU adaptation.

1-5-2a: The knob may be molded, lathed, welded or adjustable, but must be permanently

fastened.

Rationale: Clarifies that an adjustable knob is permissible, provided the knob is permanently

fastened by the manufacturer.

1-8-4: Defensive players are permitted to wear a shield on their face/head protection in the field

but it must be constructed of a molded, rigid material that is clear and permits 100 percent (no

tint) allowable light transmission.

Rationale: In an effort to promote risk minimization, tinted eye shields are prohibited for

defensive face/head protection.

6-1-1 PENALTY, 6-1-2 Thru 4 PENALTY, 6-2-1 PENALTY, 6-2-7 PENALTY: in the case

of an illegal pitch, the batter is awarded a ball. The penalty that permitted base runners to be

awarded one base without liability to be put out is removed.

Rationale: The new language creates more balance between offense and defense. The batter

should receive the award rather than runners already on base.

**2019 SOFTBALL MAJOR EDITORIAL CHANGES**

2-65-2: Clarifies there can be no appeal of the play that occurred prior to the umpire awarding an intentional walk.

6-1-2a, b: **Clarifies what motion constitutes the start of the pitch and when the step back of the**

**non-pivot foot may be taken. Overridden by IGHSAU adaptation – Prior to starting the**

**delivery of the pitch, the non-pivot foot must be in contact with the pitching plate.  THIS HAS NOW BEEN CHANGED TO THE NEW NFHS RULE ALLOWING THE STEP BACK.**

APPENDIX H: An Appendix regarding DP/FLEX rules was added for quick reference.

2019 SOFTBALL EDITORIAL CHANGES

2-65-2, 3-5-1 NOTE, 5-1 Table, 5-1-1k, 6-2-5, 7-1-2 PENALTY 3, 8-2-4 PENALTY, 8-4-3, 10-

1-1