



Oregon School Activities Association

25200 SW Parkway Avenue, Suite 1
Wilsonville, OR 97070
503.682.6722 <http://www.osaa.org>



February 18, 2026

TO: Athletic Directors and Head Softball Coaches
FROM: Missy Smith, Assistant Executive Director
SUBJECT: 2026 Softball Reminders

Included within this memo are reminders regarding OSAA policies and NFHS rules specific to softball that each coaching staff should review as we begin a new season. The links provided will take you directly to more detailed information regarding that specific reminder. Each school offering softball should have received one copy of the NFHS Softball Rules Book from the OSAA, and if your Athletic Director has your email address listed on the OSAA website under your school, you will be able to have one NFHS eBook of the rules. If your school didn't receive your copy, please let me know. Feel free to contact me if you have questions and best of luck this season!

GENERAL INFORMATION

OSAA Softball Plan Book

<http://www.osaa.org/docs/planbooks/sblplan.pdf>

The 2026 OSAA Softball Plan Book is available on the OSAA website. This plan book contains information regarding important season dates, NFHS rules information, OSAA softball rules and policies, state championship information and qualifications, etc.

Game Balls

Schools are reminded that per NFHS Softball Rules, softballs must include NFHS, COR, and Compression stamps to be legal for high school competition. This includes all levels of play (Varsity, JV, JV2, Frosh). For the regular season, any brand of softball is legal provided it has the required marks. At no time are softballs required to have an OSAA stamp. During the OSAA state playoffs, teams are required to use the Wilson A9011 B-SST, **poly center**.

Field Markings and Game Preparation

<http://www.osaa.org/docs/sbl/softballfielddiagram.pdf>

Schools shall have fields properly marked before a game begins. This includes all appropriate lines for batters' boxes, coaches' boxes, the catcher's box, foul lines, etc. It is recommended that all outfield fence signs are properly secured to the fence and off the ground.

Invitational Tournaments with Game Time Limits

- a. If fewer than 4 and 1/2 or 5 innings have been played, or the game is ended, and the score is tied, the game is removed from both team's schedules and another contest may be scheduled with a different opponent. If a game is scheduled between the same two schools at a later date, it must be continued from the point of interruption.
- b. If 4 and 1/2 (home team ahead) or 5 innings have been played and the score is not tied, the contest is declared an official game.

Game Ending and "Speed-Up" Procedures

All Levels: 15-Run (after 3 innings.) and 10-Run (after 5 innings.) Rule is in effect.

Sub-Varsity: Time Limit is allowed, per league adoption. NOTE: A maximum number of runs per inning limit are allowed only at the JV/JV2/freshman level per league adoption.

Score Differential: If a 15-run score differential occurs at the completion of three full innings or a 10-run score differential occurs at the completion of five full innings or anytime thereafter, the game shall be terminated and considered a completed game. **NOTE: if agreed upon by both coaches, once a softball team has reached a 15-run lead after three innings they may continue to play. The exception to allow flexibility with this rule needs to be addressed prior to the contest during the pre-game conference when both head coaches and umpires are present. The mandatory score differential rule of 10-runs after five full innings is still in effect.**



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Batting Practice During Games

No team involved in the game may take batting practice of any kind, even in a batting cage, once the game has started. Other teams not involved in the game cannot interfere or impede the game in progress. If the sounds of batting in the cage simulate the sounds of the game, (i.e. batted balls) it is not allowed. If the facility has doors that can be closed, and/or the game umpires agree that the sounds don't interfere with the game in progress, it is permissible.

Courtesy Runners

When a player enters as a courtesy runner, it counts as an inning played for that individual.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Pre-Event Safety Timeout

[Mobile Template](#)

[Printable Template](#)

A Pre-Event Safety Timeout is designed to prepare site administrators, coaches, officials, athletic, emergency medical services, team physicians, and anyone designated as responsible for the safety and medical well-being of athletes or spectators on game day to be aware, prepared, and educated.

Health and Safety Information

<http://www.osaa.org/docs/planbooks/sblplan.pdf>

The OSAA website contains a variety of information regarding heat and hydration, lightning safety, and concussion management. This page contains links to informational items that all coaches should familiarize themselves with as practices begin.

Pre-Season Practice Limitation Rule for Pitchers and Catchers

[Rule of Two](#)

The Practice Limitation Rule (Rule of 2) for the 3A, and 2A/1A Classifications allows softball coaches to begin pitching instruction and throwing workouts with pitchers and catchers only (maximum of eight total per day) two weeks prior to the Spring Sports First Practice Date (February 13, 2023). The 6A, 5A and now 4A classifications are still following the Pilot Program for the Practice Limitation Rule.

Lightning Safety Guidelines

<http://www.osaa.org/docs/planbooks/sblplan.pdf>

The OSAA has made a concerted effort to educate member schools and officials associations regarding the suspension and restarting of practices and contests based on the presence of lightning or thunder. Once thunder is heard or a cloud-to-ground lightning bolt is seen, all personnel, athletes and spectators should evacuate to safe structures or shelters.

2026 NFHS NEW RULES:

1-9-6: Players shall not transmit or record audio or video from the playing surface. Penalty: ejection of the offender from the game, unless the offense is judged to be of minor nature. If minor, the umpire may warn the offender and eject if the offense is repeated.

Rule 8 has been reformatted for clarity:

10-4-2 Equipment and Apparel: Umpires have the option of wearing heather gray charcoal gray or navy-blue slacks. **Effective January 1, 2027**, heather gray slacks will no longer be permitted as part of the umpire's uniform.

2026 NFHS Softball Points of Emphasis:

Obstruction:

Obstruction is defined as the act of a *defensive player who hinders or impedes a batter's attempt to make contact with a pitch or interferes with the legal progress of a runner or batter-runner advancing on the bases.* This interference may be intentional or unintentional, and it can be either physical or verbal. **However, obstruction does not apply if the defensive player is in possession of the ball or is making the initial play on a batted ball.**



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- Impeding a runner means creating a negative effect on their ability to run the bases. This might include a runner slowing down, altering their intended path, stopping altogether, retreating to the previous base, or making contact with a fielder that disrupts their movement. These examples underscore that the umpire must rely on judgment to determine both whether the runner was impeded and to what extent their progress was affected.
- If the runner or batter-runner is not impeded, there is no obstruction.
- With the exception of a fake tag, as shown, a fielder's actions or positioning alone
- can never result in an obstruction ruling.

- Unlike many rule violations in softball that carry standardized penalties—such as awarding two bases for a thrown ball that goes out of play or one base for a pitched ball entering dead ball territory—obstruction rulings are situational and vary based on the specifics of each play. The purpose of the obstruction award is not to penalize the defensive team arbitrarily, but to nullify the negative effect of the obstruction. The runner is not being granted an advantage; rather, they are being restored to the position they would have achieved had the obstruction not occurred. This could mean advancing the runner or, in some cases, returning them to a previous base—whatever is necessary to correct the disruption caused by the obstruction, based on the umpire's judgment.

- Impeding a runner means creating a negative effect on their ability to run the bases. This might include:
 - a runner slowing down
 - altering their intended path
 - stopping altogether
 - retreating to the previous base, or
 - making contact with a fielder that disrupts their movement
- The umpire must rely on judgment to determine both whether the runner was
- impeded and to what extent their progress was affected.

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS:

- Participant well-being should be a priority for all those involved in game management. Coaches and umpires can help minimize risk and injury to players by understanding and enforcing existing bench and field conduct rules. NFHS rules stipulate that once the game has begun, only the batter, runner(s), on-deck batter, coaches in the coach's box, bat/ball shaggers or one of the nine players on defense are permitted to be outside the designated dugout/bench or designated warm-up areas (i.e. batting cage or bullpen).
- Additionally, during game play, hitting the ball to teammates on defense is prohibited.
- Between innings, bench personnel are permitted to engage in throwing and running activities.
- Field structure and dugout protection vary from facility to facility. Team personnel should assess and be aware of potential hazards associated with foul balls and overthrows. For example, if a bullpen is in an area where a foul ball or overthrow could contact the pitcher or catcher, the team might assign bench personnel with a glove to stand nearby to shield those warming up.
- On-deck batters should be mindful of potential foul balls and overthrows and be prepared to move as necessary to avoid contact. On-deck batters may move to use the on-deck circle opposite the open batter.

JEWELRY, EJECTIONS, INTERRUPTED CONTEST PROCEDURES

Jewelry

The elimination of the jewelry rule will permit players to wear these items freely, Additionally, with that freedom to wear jewelry, note that any jewelry that contains profanity, taunting, language to intimidate or baiting an opponent would not be allowed under our sportsmanship rule. Besides those examples, there is existing rule coverage that gives guidance on any player equipment that presents a danger to the player, teammate, or opponent.



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Ejections During a Doubleheader and Out-of-State Ejections

<https://www.osaa.org/docs/planbooks/sblplan.pdf>

Multiple ejection reports came through the OSAA office last season where a player or coach had been ejected in the first game of a doubleheader. A reminder that when this happens, the player or coach is done for the rest of the day (**Ejection Period**) and is also suspended through the next contest at that level of competition (**Suspension Period**). Some schools have mistakenly thought that the 2nd game of the doubleheader counts as the suspension period.

- a. Example #1 – A varsity coach is ejected in the first game of a doubleheader. The coach is done for the rest of the day (**Ejection Period**). The coach is also suspended through the next varsity contest (**Suspension Period**).
- b. Example #2 – A JV player is ejected in a game on Friday (single game that day) and the JV team has a doubleheader the next day on Saturday. The player is done for the rest of the day on Friday (**Ejection Period**). The player sits out the 1st game of the Saturday doubleheader (**Suspension Period**) but is eligible to play in the 2nd game of the doubleheader on Saturday.

Remember that when a player or coach is ejected from an out-of-state contest, OSAA ejection policies still apply. It is the responsibility of the school to notify the OSAA of the out-of-state ejection. <http://www.osaa.org/docs/sbl/sblplan.pdf>

Postponing/Canceling Contests

On the day of a contest, schools are able to change the status to either Postponed or Cancelled by selecting the appropriate box in your editing window. When postponed is selected, schools have the option to list the new date/time, if known. If a postponed contest will be replayed but you aren't sure when, you can leave the new date/time field blank to complete at a later time. If you aren't sure if the contest is going to be replayed, it should be Cancelled. That way you can always reinstate the contest if you end up being able to get it scheduled. Deleting contests from your schedule and adding them back later in the season may result in contests not counting in the rankings based on the following policies. When in doubt, leave it on your schedule as Cancelled.

Adding Contest to Schedules After Certain Dates

Contests added to a team's schedule after the dates listed below may not count in the rankings based on new Board Policies regarding the rankings. Be sure that you don't delete contests from your schedule, but instead use the Postpone Contest or Cancel Contest button to keep the contest on your schedule.

- a. **Adding Contests to Schedules vs. Teams More Than One Classification Away After April 9th**
Remember that results from contests added to a team's schedule after a certain date each season (Spring – April 9th) **vs. a team more than one classification away** shall not be included in the rankings.
- b. **Adding Any Contest to Schedules After April 16th**
Results from contests added to a team's schedule after a certain date each season (Spring – Apr. 16th) shall not be included in the rankings. **NOTE:** Contests not affected by this policy include bracketed contests at tournaments, league tiebreakers, and district/league tournaments. Schools may apply for an exception to OSAA Staff in extenuating circumstances.

Tracking Out of State Opponents

[Out of State Records Management](#)

Varsity teams are required to update their schedule and results through the OSAA website throughout the season. Schools are also required to track records of out of state opponents. Each Oregon school is ultimately responsible for making sure their own schedule and results are accurate, including the records of their out of state opponents.

Home/Away Designation

- a. Baseball and softball contests, even those played as part of a tournament, shall not be listed as neutral due to the fundamental difference associated with being the home team in those sports (advantage of batting last).
- b. **Doubleheaders:** If a team is playing a doubleheader at another school, both contests should be shown as away contests on the schedule to accurately portray where the contests are physically taking place. When scoring the contest, schools are able to check a box if the "home" team batted first so the home/away designation is correct for the rankings.



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Rosters

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It shall be the responsibility of each member school to submit varsity team sport rosters to the OSAA through prior to the first contest date of that sport's season. Varsity rosters are required for the following OSAA sanctioned sports: football, boys' soccer, girls' soccer, volleyball, boys' basketball, girls' basketball, baseball, softball. Subsequent changes to each varsity teams' roster shall be updated as they occur throughout the season.

Sportsmanship Award

<http://www.osaa.org/awards/sportsmanship>

The OSAA Sportsmanship Committee, along with the OAOA, implemented a sportsmanship award aimed at improving the relationship between our schools and athletic officials. Officials have the opportunity to submit a form after every contest and select which team they would like to nominate. At the end of each season, the committee chooses a winner for each sport. That program is given a banner to hang in the gym and earns 100 OSAA Cup points for their school.