



## **Memorandum**

DATE: January 2024  
TO: CIF Coaches  
CIF Umpires  
COPY: Chris Fahey  
Section Commissioners  
FROM: Ken Allan,  
California State Baseball Rules Interpreter  
Former Member, NFHS Rules Committee  
RE: 2024 Rule Interpretations, Points of Emphasis

The following information is provided to commissioners, coaches, and umpires in an effort to provide consistency in rule enforcement and game management. Please see the Standards of Conduct section. Also, please note the definition of malicious contact has been added. Any questions should be directed to Ken Allan at: [kensport101@earthlink.net](mailto:kensport101@earthlink.net). (909) 861-7767.

These are the significant rule changes, points of emphasis and interpretations for the 2024 season. **Please be sure your lower division coaches have a copy.**

### **NOTE TO INSTRUCTIONAL CHAIRMEN**

Please do not add to or change any information in this memo. This material has been approved by the CIF State Office and is expected to be published as is.  
Thank you.

**SUMMON BATTER PROCEDURE**—The correct mechanic is to be stationed on the side of the field of the team coming to bat. When the pitcher has two pitches remaining, move to the foul line and verbally and visually indicate to the pitcher he has two pitches left. With one pitch left, facing the dugout, verbally and visually indicate to the leadoff hitter that the pitcher has one pitch left.

**MALICIOUS CONTACT**—The NFHS does not have a definition for malicious contact. In an effort to provide consistent enforcement, below is the California definition for malicious contact. California umpires are urged to use this as a guideline for determining malicious contact. Also, umpires are urged to carefully study the NFHS POE on malicious contact in its 2024 rule book.

*Malicious contact is violent, avoidable contact between two opposing players. It often occurs when a runner collides with a fielder in an effort to dislodge possession of the ball. Malicious contact can also occur when a fielder unnecessarily applies a hard tag to a runner. Intent and play situation must be a consideration in determining malicious contact. Hard contact is not, in itself, malicious contact.*

## CASE PLAYS

There is a collision between a runner and a fielder. (a) A runner legally slides at home plate. His momentum takes him past the plate into the catcher who is knocked to the ground (b) a runner rounding second on a base hit, collides with F6 who is knocked to the ground or (c) a runner trying to avoid a tag, collides with another fielder, knocking him to the ground. **RULING:** In (a) since it's a legal slide, there is no penalty on the runner. In (b) there is no penalty on the runner unless it's clear the runner initiated the contact and (c) there is no penalty on the runner unless the runner clearly initiated contact.

There are also a number of malicious contact situations on page 35 of the NFHS Case Book. Umpires are urged to familiarize themselves with this material.

**PROPER LINING OF THE FIELD**—There have been several reports of fields not properly lined. This includes fields that lack the lines of the coach's box and the on-deck circle. It also includes fields where the batters and catcher's boxes are not properly lined. Please see page 10 of the rule book. If you have control of your field, please be sure these rule-required markings are visible.

## COMMENTS ON THE 2024 RULE CHANGES

**1-6-1** Wrist bands must be worn on the player's wrist or forearm and not looped around their belts. Colors white or gray are not permitted.

**1-6-2**

**3-2-5** One-way electronic communication is now permitted from the dugout/bench area to the catcher only. No other player is allowed to wear or use this device. A coach may only communicate with the catcher.

**PLAY:** Catcher looks toward the dugout a few moments then goes out to talk with the pitcher. It's apparent he is passing information from the coach to the pitcher. **RULING:** Legal. No trip is charged.

**10-2-3h** Umpires no longer can forfeit a game due to spectator conduct. Any issue should be resolved by game management. If that's not available, the game should be suspended, and information forwarded to either the league or school for final disposition.

### Speed Up

**Rule #3** Base umpire no longer needs to place the ball on the pitcher's plate after a half inning and the plate umpire no longer needs to hand the ball to the catcher.

## **POINTS OF EMPHASIS**

### **Malicious Contact**

Malicious contact is the third most discussed Point of Emphasis behind good sporting behavior and pitching restrictions. The majority of intentional collisions occur at home plate when the catcher is attempting to make a play on a base runner. Umpires must know the difference between a “train wreck” play in which a thrown ball, the fielder, and runner meet at the same time. It is often a violent convergence, but not intentional, nor is anyone trying to hurt the other. It is just a normal baseball play and is not to be considered malicious contact.

### **Profanity**

This can be a little tricky. If a profanity is loud enough to be heard by spectators, it’s a no brainer. The individual should be ejected. The problem is if the profanity is low key and uttered by a player or coach in frustration. Umpires are advised that if it’s a player, to call “time,” take the player to the coach, tell the coach what the player said and warn the coach that any further profanity by anyone on the team will be subject to ejection. Under similar circumstances, the coach should be warned. Any language that is intimidating, insulting, demeaning, or hurtful will not be tolerated. The goal is to treat everyone fairly and treat each other with respect.

### **Pace of Play**

The average time for a seven-inning high school game is about 2 hours 10 minutes. The philosophy of pace of play is to make players, coaches and umpires aware that certain continuous activities cause a definite slowdown in the game. Baseball games can be more efficient with a focus on time and game management. Here are five areas:

#### **20 second Time Limit Between Pitches/Plays (6-2-2-c)**

This rule is meant to be used when preventative officiating fails to provide the necessary outcome. Usually, a word with the coach between innings about a pitcher’s delays will solve the issue. The rule is intended to be used when a pitcher is prolonging the delivery of the pitch because of gamesmanship or overall lack of game efficiency.

#### **Time Between Half-innings**

The rule book says one minute from the last out of the previous half-inning. The reality is that’s it rarely, if ever, accomplished. I’ve observed a number of high school games over the years, and I’ve even timed it between innings. A minute 20 seconds is about the average. It’s not necessary to change the time. What is necessary is for umpires be be proactive. An example would be to get a backup catcher out to warm up the pitcher if the starting catcher is on base or at bat on the third out. Umpires are urged to use good judgment in enforcing this rule.

#### **Batter Repeatedly Stepping Out of the Batter’s Box (7-3-1)**

To my knowledge, this has not been a problem in games I have observed. However, this is one area of which the umpires should be aware.

Time management is crucial to how the game progresses. Umpires must be consistent in motivating both teams to get on and off the field and to expedite conferences. These are areas an umpire can be a positive factor is keeping the game moving at an acceptable pace.

### **Excessive Player Conferences**

Umpires need to be aware of excessive player conferences. The game situation should be a guideline. It wouldn't make much sense to see numerous defensive player conferences with a team leading in a blowout game. The bottom line on these Pace of Play items in Points of Emphasis is to make players, coaches and umpires aware of repeated situations than can unnecessarily slow the pace of the game.

### **Facilities**

If there is an issue with field conditions that cannot be made reasonably hazard-free, the event should be relocated or rescheduled. An example would be standing water on the field.

## **STANDARDS OF CONDUCT**

Coaches and players are expected to maintain a standard of conduct which is necessary for the proper administration of the game and is consistent with behavioral expectations of students and staff in a classroom environment. Umpires have considerable latitude in removing coaches and players for various acts which interfere with the game. Many problems can and should be resolved with verbal cautions or warnings. Below, however, are examples of behavior that would likely require an ejection.

1. A player drawing a line on the dirt to indicate the location of a pitch.
2. Profanity by either a coach or player directed at an umpire or profanity loud enough to likely be heard by fans.
3. A coach refusing to return to the dugout or coaching lines after an umpire has explained a ruling.
4. Jumping up and down or other such actions to show displeasure over a call or ruling whether from the dugout or the field.
5. Any non-playing action related contact with an umpire, whether it's accidental or intentional.
6. The throwing of equipment such as bats or helmets in reaction to a call or ruling.
7. A coach or player who refuses to follow verbal directions from an umpire relating to the administration of the game.
8. A coach who leaves his position, after being warned, to argue balls and strikes.
9. Blatant violation of the rules such as cutting considerably short of third base in scoring a run.

## **POST-GAME EJECTIONS**

**POST GAME EJECTIONS**—In the event of a problem with coaches or players after the conclusion of a game, the umpires should write a report just as they would with an in-game ejection. This report should be reported in the same manner as an in-game ejection. Any post-game incidents that involve identifiable individuals should be filed as an ejection report and not an incident report. An incident report should be filed for any event that involves unidentifiable individuals (usually spectators/fans). Umpires should report any unsportsmanlike conduct that occurs involving them until they leave the game site.

These items have appeared in the past and are repeated as an aid to proper game management and pace of play.

**FOUL BALLS**—In order to keep games moving more smoothly, it is strongly recommended that any ball retrieved by the on-deck hitter, or a long foul ball on the visitor's side of the field, be rolled to the home dugout as soon as possible. If you are the visiting team and your on-deck batter retrieves a ball at the backstop, please have him roll it to the home dugout rather than taking it with him back to the on-deck circle. Let's continue to give this a good effort as it is a big help in keeping the game moving. Umpires are asked to remind coaches of this at the pregame meeting.

**LINE UP CARDS**—COACHES, please do not separate lineup cards. Just hand everything to the plate umpire. It is acceptable to provide a copy of the lineup card to the opposing team scorekeeper before the pregame meeting at home plate. Umpires are instructed to take the home lineup card first, then the visiting lineup card before inspecting either of the lineup cards.

**LINEUP CARDS II**—If you are using a designated hitter, please list the DH either directly below or directly across from the player for whom he is hitting. Please do not list the DH at the bottom of the lineup card, unless of course, he is batting for the player ninth in the order.

**PREGAME MEETING**—It has been noted that during the pregame meeting at home plate, members of the visiting team have often been observed outside their dugout warming up with bats. Rule 2-10-2 provides that BOTH teams must remain in the dugout during the pregame meeting. Please remind your teams.

**LEAVING THE DUGOUT DURING A LIVE BALL**—Coaches are doing a much better job in helping umpires enforce this rule. Players who leave the dugout to congratulate a scoring runner during a live ball will receive a team warning. Any following violators are subject to ejection. Coaches are also asked to remain within the lines of the coaching box.

**COACHING ATTIRE**—Umpires are expected to enforce this rule. This is usually an issue in lower-level games. As per rule 3-2-1, coaches must be in the uniform of their team. As a guideline, the following is acceptable: Baseball shoes, baseball pants, a jersey top similar to what the team is wearing, either a tee shirt with a team logo, wind shirt with a team logo, a jacket, and a baseball cap. The following is NOT acceptable at ANY level: Coaches who are wearing shorts, or other non-baseball attire such as, but not limited to, sweatpants, jeans, tennis shoes, or sandals. These items are not permissible. The penalty for non-compliance is that the coach is restricted to the dugout. If the team's only coach is in non-compliance, he will be allowed on the field to participate in the pre-game meeting at home plate. He will also be allowed on the field to attend to an injured player. Otherwise, he must remain in the dugout.

**THANKS**—To all the coaches and umpires for their past cooperation and good luck for 2024.