



March 6, 2023

NFHS Softball Weekly Rule Interpretations

A few questions have arisen about batting out of order. The first topic centers around runner advancement when the batter has completed their turn at bat. The second topic addresses appeals after an intentional walk. This week's interpretations will focus on these two particular areas and how the rules should be applied.

First, Rule 7-1-2 Penalties 2 deals with the situation where an improper batter has completed their turn at bat and the defensive team properly appeals prior to a pitch to the next batter. This typically happens when an improper batter hits the ball to end their time at bat. In this case, the improper batter is removed from base, the batter who should have batted is called out and any runners not put out on the play are returned to the base occupied at the time of the pitch. Situations where a runner advances by way of an award during this time that the improper batter completes their at bat:

- a) When ball four on an improper batter is a wild pitch that enters dead ball territory. By rule, this is a one base award for all runners (Rule 8-4-3c).
- b) A runner is forced to advance because the batter was awarded first base (Rule 8-4-3a).

In both of these cases, the runners were advanced during the time that the improper batter completed their turn at bat (became a batter-runner (8-1-1c)) and any advancement during this time is subject to being negated if the improper batter's time at bat is properly appealed.

Secondly, there has been discussion about the ability to appeal following an intentional walk. As Rule 2-65-2 states, for the purposes of an appeal an intentional walk is considered the same as throwing a pitch. Therefore, any play that occurred prior to the intentional walk can no longer be appealed. Confusion has arisen if an appeal is still allowed on the player that was intentionally walked. As with any appeal, the current play can be appealed until the next pitch, legal or illegal, or an intentional walk is awarded to the next batter. This appeal can be for a missed base, one left too soon on a caught fly ball or a batting out of order situation.

Situation 1: With R1 on first base and no outs, B2 is due to bat but B3 comes to bat. The first pitch to B3 is a wild pitch and R1 steals second base. With a 3-0 count on B3 the next pitch is called a ball and B3 is awarded first base on ball four. Before a pitch to B4, the defensive coach appeals that B3 has batted out of order. The umpire agrees and rules B2 out, negates B3's at bat by removing B3 from first base and returning R1 to first base. The umpire announces that B3 is the next proper batter with R1 on first base and one out. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. Any advancement while the improper batter is at bat is legal, in this situation R1 should remain at second base. The proper ruling is to call B2 out, remove B3 from first base and R1 remains at second base. B3 is the next proper batter with one out and R1 on second base. (7-2-1 Penalties 2)

Situation 2: With R1 on first base and no outs, B2 is due to bat but B3 comes to bat. The first pitch to B3 is a wild pitch and R1 steals second base. With a 3-0 count on B3 the next pitch is a wild pitch and R1 steals third base as B3 is awarded first base since the pitch was called ball four. Before a pitch to B4, the defensive coach appeals that B3 has batted out of order. The umpire agrees and rules B2 out, negates B3's at bat by removing B3 from first base and returning R1 to second base. The umpire announces that B3 is the next proper batter with R1 on second base and one out. **RULING:** Correct ruling. R1's advancement from second to third base occurred during the time that B3 completed their turn at bat (became a batter-runner) so this advancement is subject to being negated if B3's improper at bat is properly appealed. However, since R1's advancement from first to second base occurred during B3's at bat and any advancement while the improper batter is at bat is legal they remain at second base. (7-2-1 Penalties 2)

Situation 3: With R1 on second base and R2 on first base and no outs, B3 is due to bat but B4 comes to bat. The first pitch to B4 is a wild pitch allowing R1 to steal third and R2 to steal second base. Ball four to B4 is a wild pitch that bounces off the fence and enters dead ball territory. The umpire awards R1 home, R2 third base and B4 first base on ball four. Before a pitch to B5, the defensive coach appeals that B4 has batted out of order. The umpire agrees and rules B3 out and negates B4's at bat by removing B4 from first base. However, since R1 and R2 advanced due to the ball entering dead ball territory the umpire rules that their advancement is legal and R1's run scores and R2 remains at third base. B4 is the next proper batter with R2 on third base, one run scored and one out. **RULING:** Incorrect ruling. Since R1 and R2 advanced during the time that B4 completed their turn at bat (became a batter-runner) their advancement is subject to being negated if B4's improper at bat is properly appealed. Proper ruling is to call B3 out, remove B4 from first base and return R1 to third base and R2 to second base. The next proper batter is B4, with R1 on third base and R2 on second base and one out. (7-2-1 Penalties 2)

Situation 4: B1 hits a stand up double but misses first base on their way to second base. As B2 is approaching the plate the defensive coach informs the plate umpire that they wish to intentionally walk B2, and the plate umpire awards B2 first base on the intentional walk. Prior to a pitch to B3 the defensive coach now appeals that B1 missed first base. The umpire denies the appeal as the intentional walk to B2 is the same as throwing a pitch and the previous play can no longer be appealed. **RULING:** Correct ruling. Once an intentional walk has been awarded the previous play cannot be appealed. (2-65-2 a & b)

Situation 5: With no runners on and no outs, B1 is the proper batter but B3 bats instead. With a 2 ball 0 strike count, B3 hits a ball that clears the home run fence in foul territory. Following that pitch, the defensive coach informs the plate umpire they wish to intentionally walk B3. After the intentional walk to B3 but prior to a pitch to B4 the defensive coach appeals B3 batting out of order. The umpire rules B1 out and removes B3 from first base, and states that B2 is the next proper batter with one out. **RULING:** Correct ruling. Although once an intentional walk has been awarded the previous play cannot be appealed, the current play is still allowed to be appealed until a pitch (legal or illegal) or another intentional walk is awarded. (2-65-2 a & b, 7-2-1 Penalties 2)