



2026 WMBUA Interpreter's Rules clinic

Presented by
Kevin Joyce, WMBUA Interpreter
Sunday, March 15, 2026

CLINIC AGENDA

NFHS Rule Changes
2026

NFHS Points of
Emphasis 2026

Questions & Other
Areas For Discussion

2026 RULES CHANGE – DOUBLE FIRST BASE

Mandating Double First Base (Effective January 1, 2027) and associated rules (1-2-9, 2-5-1h, 2-16-1h, 8-2-1, 8-2-2(a) 1-7, 8-2-7, 8-4-1g(1)) — A double first base enhances player safety by reducing the risk of collisions between the batter-runner and the first baseman on close plays. It provides a separate space for each player—fair territory for the fielder and foul territory for the runner—helping to prevent injuries while maintaining the integrity of the game.



2026 RULES CHANGE – DOUBLE FIRST BASE – INTERPRETATIONS

NFHS has adopted the same interpretations that the NCAA has adopted governing the double first base. The following is verbatim interpretations communicated by the NCAA:

The double first base may be used during regular-season and postseason competition.

1) A batted ball hitting or bounding over the white portion of the bag is a fair ball. A batted ball hitting or bounding over the colored (orange or green) bag without first touching or bounding over the white section is foul.



2026 RULES CHANGE – DOUBLE FIRST BASE – INTERPRETATIONS

2) When an initial play is being made on the batter-runner at first base, the defense must use the white section of the double base and the batter-runner must use the colored base with the following exceptions.

Exception 1—On a dropped third strike, the fielder and batter-runner may touch either the white or colored base. After a dropped third strike, if the fielder is drawn to a position in foul territory on the side of the colored base to receive a throw, the runner may touch the white base in order to avoid a collision. Normal running lane restrictions still apply.

Exception 2—When the defense fields a fair batted ball or throws from foul territory near first base to make a play on the batter-runner, or when an errant throw pulls the defense off the white portion of the base into foul ground, the batter-runner may use either portion of the double base and can run the last few steps to the base in fair territory in an effort to avoid a collision. In this situation, normal running lane violation rules do not apply; however, if intentional interference is ruled, the batter runner would be out. If the intentional interference is deemed to be flagrant, the runner will also be ejected. In this exception, the defense is still required to touch the white base to complete the force play.



2026 RULES CHANGE – DOUBLE FIRST BASE – INTERPRETATIONS

3) If there is a play on the batter-runner and the batter-runner clearly touches only the white portion of the double base, it is treated the same as missing the base.

If this failure to touch the proper base occurs during a close play and the batter-runner has not passed the base with both feet, the batter-runner should be called out.

If the batter-runner clearly beats the throw to first base but misses the base and has both feet on the ground beyond the back edge of the base, the batter-runner would be called out if the defense appeals prior to the batter-runner returning to first base. The proper mechanic is for the umpire to make no call on this play as the batter-runner has not yet touched first base.

4) On extra-base hits or other balls hit to the outfield when there is no chance for a play to be made at the double base or other plays within the infield when there is no initial play made on the batter-runner, the batter-runner may touch either the white or colored section of the base. Should, however, the batter-runner reach and go beyond first base, they may only return to the white section of the base.

5) Once the batter-runner reaches first base, they shall then use only the white base.





2025 Double First Base



Fielder Requirements

On batted balls, the fielder can NOT record an out by using the colored base

On uncaught third strikes, the fielder may use either base

If a fielder wishes to appeal that a runner hit the wrong base or missed the base, they may do so by tagging the runner or touching the base (must be an unmistakable act of appeal)

Batter Runner Requirements

On batted balls where there is an initial play at first, must touch the colored base (exception: bad throw that pulls fielder into foul territory)

On uncaught third strikes, may use either base, ideally will look to avoid contact with fielder by using opposite base

Runner's lane rules apply, unless the batter runner has adjusted to avoid a collision

After initial play, must only use white base

The Critical Moment

A runner is considered to have MISSED the base when they have 'clearly passed it'

Clearly passed = 2 feet on the ground beyond the base in the direction they are advancing

Prior to having MISSED the base, if the ball arrives, the batter runner is out via force play, no appeal necessary

If the ball arrives AFTER both feet are on the ground beyond the base, the runner can only be retired via appeal

U1 Signaling

Ball beats runner, signal out

Missed/wrong base on CLOSE play, signal out and execute the NCAA guidance for the point/wave to clarify missed/wrong base

Missed/wrong base on play where both feet are on ground beyond base when ball arrives, no signal, wait for appeal

PU Assistance

PU should be ready to add information, ensure head is around on time to see base touch

IF U1/BU isn't sure what base is touched, they will look to PU who will signal with a point in the direction of the base that was touched

Prior to using video review, PU should clarify what base was touched and what the appropriate result is

Crew Best Practices

We should NEVER call time out prior to the batter runner returning to first base, ensure the defense has an opportunity to appeal

Crew consult questions: Which base? When did ball arrive? Was there an appeal?

2026 RULES CHANGE – SCHOOL UNIFORM

School Uniform (1-4-4)

— Clear uniform guidelines help maintain the integrity, fairness, and educational purpose of high school baseball. Uniforms represent the team and school, not individual expression, and must comply with NFHS rules. Defined standards prevent confusion, promote equality, and teach values like respect, discipline, and accountability— hallmarks of education-based athletics.

ART. 4 . . . The school's official uniform (including uniform pants, jersey, visible undergarments, socks, stockings, caps and headwear) may bear only a visible single manufacturer's logo (partial or whole) or trademark. A manufacturer's logo/trademark shall not exceed 2¼ square inches with no dimension exceeding 2¼ inches. No more than one manufacturer's logo/trademark or reference shall be permitted on the outside of each item. (The same restriction shall apply to either the manufacturer's logo/trademark or reference.) **Effective, January 1, 2027, a school's name, school's nickname, school's logo, school's mascot, and/or the player's name are permitted on the uniform top and/or pants. One American flag 2 inches x 3 inches may be worn or occupy space on each item of uniform apparel.**

By state association adoption, to allow for special occasions, commemorative or memorial patches, that will be uniformly placed, not to exceed 4 square inches, to be worn on jerseys in an appropriate and dignified manner without compromising the integrity of the uniform.

2026 RULES CHANGE – PLAYER COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT

Player Communication Equipment (1-6-3)

— In high school baseball, players are not permitted to wear any audio or video equipment for the purpose of broadcasting or live recording while actively participating in the contest. This rule protects safety, fairness, competitive integrity, privacy of others, focus on education and the educational mission of high school sports.

NOTE: Per 1-6-2, players may wear an earpiece as shown, which allows for one way communication from the dugout/bench to the catcher only.



2026 RULES CHANGE – DEFINITION OF PLAYER TO PLAYER MEETING

Definition of Player to Player Meeting

(2-10-3, 3-4-6) — Utilizing the rule additions, clarifies that the defensive players can offer support and provide camaraderie to their pitcher and limits the occurrences. The new rule also clarifies that it is not a charged conference and maintaining the integrity of the existing rule. It is hopeful that these changes prevent teams from stalling to gain an unfair advantage when weather or darkness is approaching.

3-4-6 now states: “Each team, when on defense, may be granted not more than one player-to-player meeting during an inning to permit players to confer with defensive personnel. The umpire shall deny any subsequent player-to-player defensive team requests for meetings for that half-inning.”



POINTS OF EMPHASIS – DISCIPLINE

In the game of baseball, umpires serve as impartial authorities whose primary role is to ensure that the contest is conducted fairly, safely, and within the framework of established NFHS rules. Respecting their decisions is foundational to the integrity of the sport and models appropriate behavior.

When coaches and players accept umpire rulings—whether or not they agree—it promotes sportsmanship, discipline, and respect for the game. It also helps maintain focus, keeps the pace of play steady, and fosters a positive environment for all participants, including opponents and spectators. Disputing or showing visible dissent toward an umpire's decision undermines their authority and disrupts the game.

More importantly, it sets a poor example for younger players and fans. Such behavior, if left unchecked, can escalate tensions and compromise the spirit of competition.



POINTS OF EMPHASIS – DISCIPLINE

- Any unsportsmanlike conduct, arguing, or disrespect directed toward umpires will result in disciplinary action, which may include warnings, restriction to the bench, or ejection from the game found in NFHS Baseball Rule 3 (3-3 Articles 1-4) and Rule 10 (10-2-3).
- These penalties are not punitive in nature—they are protective of the values that define high school sports: respect, integrity, and personal responsibility. Respect for officials isn't just a rule—it's a reflection of the maturity, leadership, and character we hope to instill in all participants through educational athletics.



POINTS OF EMPHASIS – SPORTSMANSHIP (BENCH JOCKEYING/PROPS)

Sportsmanship (Bench Jockeying and Props)

High school baseball exists within the framework of education-based athletics, where the primary goals extend beyond competition to include character development, sportsmanship, and mutual respect. With that in mind, bench jockeying has no place in the high school game. Bench jockeying—defined as negative verbal comments, taunting, or attempts to distract, intimidate, or embarrass opponents or officials from the dugout—violates the standards of conduct expected in interscholastic competition. It detracts from the integrity of the sport and undermines the core values of respect and self-control that high school sports are intended to teach. More importantly, bench jockeying often escalates tensions, provokes retaliation, and leads to unsportsmanlike behavior that can tarnish the contest and damage the experience for players, coaches, umpires, and spectators alike. High school athletes are still learning how to carry themselves with dignity and class under pressure. Allowing or ignoring bench jockeying sends the wrong message. By rule, sportsmanship (bench jockeying) is prohibited and will result in warnings, restrictions, or ejections as deemed appropriate by the umpire. Enforcement of this rule is not about silencing enthusiasm—it is about upholding the spirit of fair play and modeling appropriate conduct for students, schools, and communities.



POINTS OF EMPHASIS – SPORTSMANSHIP (BENCH JOCKEYING & PROPS)

- Game Management Guidelines for Props
 - The Head Coach will be restricted to the dugout for the remainder of the game when a prop is brought onto the playing surface at any time. The Head Coach could be subject to further penalty if props continued to be brought onto the playing field.
 - The use of props in the teams dugout area is permissible.



POINTS OF EMPHASIS – PITCHING POSITIONS

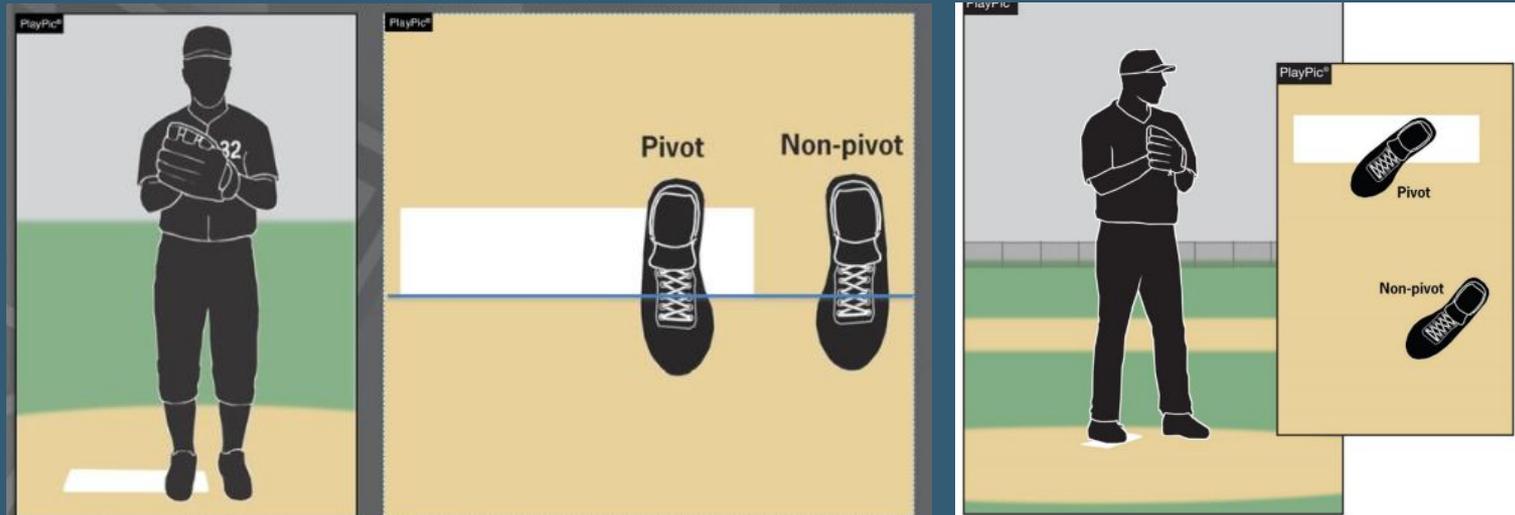
Pitchers are required to use one of two positions: the wind-up or the set. It is important that umpires, coaches, and players know what position the pitcher is using so they know which part of Rule 6 is in play.

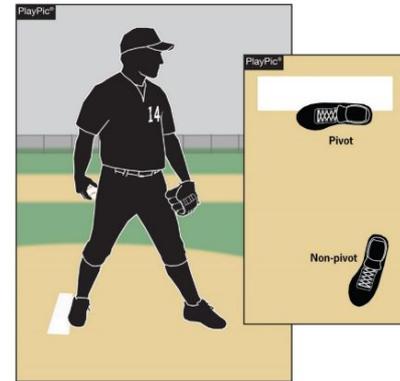


The position of the pivot foot determines which of the pitching positions is being used.

- In the wind-up position, the pitcher's pivot foot is in contact with the pitcher's plate and is not parallel to it. They may only deliver a pitch or step backward off the pitcher's plate with the pivot first.
- In the set position, the pivot foot is in contact with or directly in front of and parallel to the pitcher's plate.

LEGAL WINDUP POSITION





LEGAL SET POSITION

POINTS OF EMPHASIS – RUNNING LANE AWARENESS

Enforcing the running lane rule (NFHS Rule 8-4-1g) is vital for player safety, fairness, and the educational goals of high school baseball. The batter-runner must use the designated lane in foul territory during a play at first base.

- Safety – The lane prevents collisions and protects both the runner and the fielder.
- Fair Play – Staying in the lane avoids unfair interference with defensive plays.
- Consistency – Regular enforcement promotes accountability and discourages rule violations.
- Education – Teaching proper lane use reinforces respect for the rules and the game.

Violations result in interference, with the batter-runner out and runners returned. This rule is more than a technicality—it's essential to a safe, fair, and respectful game.



QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION



HAVE A GREAT 2026 SEASON!

Thank you for all you do in support of baseball and umpiring in Maine. Enjoy the season and time with friends and colleagues.

