



March 18, 2026

NFHS Softball Weekly Rule Interpretations

It should be noted that due to some restructuring of the rule book performed between the 2025 and 2026 NFHS Softball Rules Book that some of the rule references have been updated. Please note the rule references provided will utilize the 2026 Rules Book.

Situation 1: B1 hits a soft ground ball down the third base line that is fielded by F5. As B1 is running to first base with both feet inside the running lane they see F3's mitt adjusting to the throw. B1 then raises their left hand placing it in line with F3's mitt and their hand is hit by the throw causing the ball to deflect away from F3. The umpire rules that the batter-runner is not out stating "the batter-runner is always safe if they are running completely inside the three-foot lane and are hit with the throw".

RULING: Incorrect ruling by the umpire. It is correct that a batter-runner that is hit by a thrown ball while legally running with both feet having last contacted the ground within the running lane is not in violation of rule 8-2-6 for interfering with the fielder taking the throw at first base. However, if the umpire judges that the batter-runner intentionally interfered with a thrown ball while in the three-foot lane they would still be liable to be called out for this interference. Simply being hit with a thrown ball when legally running the bases within the three-foot lane is not a violation, but if the umpire judges the batter-runner placed their hand/arm in line with the throw to prevent the fielder from catching the ball that action would qualify as interference. (8-2-7)

Situation 2: Team A provides a lineup to the plate umpire at the pregame conference, upon review the plate umpire notices the coach has the DP in the 3rd spot in the lineup and has DP/1 as their position. They also notice that the FLEX is in the 10th spot in the lineup, but they do not have a starting defensive position. The umpire rejects the lineup stating it is not an official lineup utilizing DP/FLEX since the FLEX does not have a starting defensive position. **RULING:** Correct ruling by the umpire. Utilizing the DP/FLEX rule allows a lot of flexibility for different strategies to be used throughout the game. However, since the FLEX's primary role is to play defense, if they are not one of the players on defense when their team is in the field they have left game. This same requirement to be on defense applies to the start of the game, if they do not have a starting defensive position in the initial lineup then they did not start the game, and the team did not start with the DP/FLEX option they started with a straight nine in their lineup. To have an official lineup utilizing the DP/FLEX the FLEX must have a starting defensive position (F1-F9) listed. After the lineups are made official at the pregame conference the coach may then inform the umpire that they want their DP to play defense for the FLEX, at that point the FLEX would leave the game and have one reentry to utilize later in the game. (3-1-3, 3-2-6e&f)

Situation 3: With R1 starting on second base, F5 is playing up in front of the baseline and several feet from the foul line. F6 is playing deeper and well behind the baseline. B2 hits a sharp ground ball to the left of F5 who dives toward the ball. In a) F5 tips the ball with their glove as they dive. In b) F5 does not contact the batted ball. In both cases the ball gets by F5 and accidentally hits R1 (it is judged they could not avoid contact with the ball) running between the two fielders as F6 is moving to field the ball.

RULING: In a) to have interference with a ball that was touched by a fielder the runner would have to

have been able to avoid contact and choose not to or put another way they would have to intentionally contact the deflected ball. Since this contact was judged accidental there is no violation and the ball should remain live and play would continue. In b) since the ball was not touched by F5, if F6 has a reasonable chance to gain control of the ground ball they would be considered making the initial play on the batted ball and if R1 hindered, impeded or confused them from making this initial play on a batted ball R1 would be guilty of interference. The ball would be dead and R1 would be called out, and the batter-runner would be awarded first base and credited with a fielder's choice. (2-46-3a, 8-7-10a, 8-7-12, 8-9-6)