

## 2024 – 2025 MSHSAA BASEBALL RULES MEETING ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. **RULES BOOK** - The official Baseball rules code for interscholastic Baseball in Missouri that is published by the National Federation of the State High School Associations.

2. **RULES INTERPRETERS** – These individuals are available to coaches & officials for NFHS rule interpretations.

| Name          | Region | Email  |
|---------------|--------|--|
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**NOTE:** Please contact your local rule interpreter before calling the MSHSAA Office. If further clarification is needed, interpreters shall contact the MSHSAA Office.

3. **BASEBALL ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS CHANGES:**

- Recommend any pitcher unavailable to pitch in a state series round or district round shall not be eligible for said round if the contest is rescheduled for a later date. Once the district tournament schedule is set by the tournament committee, that's the schedule that will determine a pitcher's availability
- Recommend that the Quarterfinal round in Classes 5-6 be formatted as a best 2 out of 3 series, using the current format determining teams and the current predetermined host site format. Game 1 would occur on Friday of Week 47 and game 2 would occur on Saturday of Week 47, with game 3 (if necessary) being played immediately following. Home and away will be determined by a coin flip initially. The team that is home for game 1, will be visitor for game 2. If there is a game 3, a coin flip will determine the home team.

4. **MSHSAA BALLOT CHANGES:**  
**SPECIFIC TO ALL ATHLETIC PROGRAMS:**

- INELIGIBLE STUDENTS AND FORFEITURES - Removes By-Law 5.5.4 and amends By-Law 1.2.3 to consolidate language and clarify the penalties for playing an ineligible player during the regular season and in the MSHSAA District/State Series.
- Bona Fide Student Rule and Penalty-- Amends Section 2 and By-Law 2.1 to add clarity to the definition of a Bona fide student, what constitutes a change in Bona fide student status, and the associated penalty for violating By-Law 2.1.
- Name, Image and Likeness -- Amends By-Laws 2.6 and 3.6 to allow students to receive a benefit for their name, image or likeness if the promotions do not represent an affiliation to a member school or utilize names, marks, etc. they do not own, and also to prohibit "NIL Collectives."
- Transfer Student Participation Eligibility -- Eliminates By-Law 3.4.2 in the Certification of Eligibility subsection and amends By-Law 3.10.7 in the Residency and Transfer subsection to allow transfer students to possibly become eligible the first day classes are attended, instead of the fifth day, provided the proper transfer form has been submitted and processed.
- Elimination of 250 Mile Travel Restriction-Athletics -- Amends By-Law 3.18.3.c to eliminate the one time per year 250- mile travel limitation for sports
- First Allowable High School Contest Start Day for All Sports Seasons -- Amends By-Law 3.29 to change the first allowable contest date for all sports seasons from Friday to Thursday.
- Penalty for Ejections -- Amends By-Laws 5.5.1.c and 5.5.1.d to indicate that participation after an ejection at any level is prohibited until the one-contest suspension at the level at which the ejection occurred has been served.

4. **NFHS BASEBALL RULES CHANGES:**

**1-3-2c1 — Modified that resin, pine tar or any other drying agent is permitted on the bat in a specific area.**

Modified that resin, pine tar or any other drying agent is permitted on the bat in a specific area (1-3-2c1) — This change allows the batter to have better control over a non-wood bat, so it does not slip out of the hands due to moisture or perspiration. It also makes the rule similar for wood bats and non-wood bats.

**4-4-1c — Modified the definition of forfeiture.**

Modified the definition of forfeiture (4-4-1c) — There are seven criteria for forfeiture. This modification of the subsection “c” is the result when a coach, player or team personnel does not conform to the instructions of the umpire. An ejection is a serious violation of sportsmanship and game decorum. To aggravate the violation with a game forfeiture is egregious and contrary to the basic premise of education-based athletics.

5. **2024 NFHS Points of Emphasis**

- The NFHS Baseball Rules Committee and the NFHS Board of Directors believes there are areas of the game of interscholastic baseball that need to be addressed and given special attention. These areas of concern are often cyclical – some areas need more attention than others, and that is why they might appear in the rules book for consecutive editions. These concerns are identified as “Points of Emphasis.” For the 2025 high school baseball season, attention is being called to: Use of Authenticating Mark Program Balls, Pitching Positions, Bench Decorum, Use of Props and Improper Use of Communication Equipment. When a topic is included in the Points of Emphasis, these topics are important enough to reinforce throughout the academic year because additional attention is warranted.
- Use of Authenticating Mark Program Balls The use of baseballs that have the Authenticating Mark printed on them proves that the conforming equipment is essential to the integrity of contests played under the NFHS rules. This program helps to promote a level playing field by ensuring consistency in the equipment being used. Using baseballs that hold the Authenticating Mark allows for the development of more sophisticated standards in balls and clearly communicates to administrators, coaches and officials that these standards are being met.
- Pitching Positions The premise of the pitching positions is very basic. It has evolved over the years to stay current with existing teaching styles and the increasing skill levels of high school age students. It is one of the most talked about and modified rules in the history of NFHS rules writing. We should always be cautious and concerned that the reasons to change the rule is never associated to the whims or trends of other levels of baseball. 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.
- Bench Decorum Sportsmanship, or good sporting behavior, is about treating one another with respect and exhibiting appropriate behavior. It is about being fair, honest and caring. When this type of appropriate behavior occurs, competitive play is more enjoyable for everyone. Coaches set the tone at athletic contests with their display of sportsmanship and respect. If these individuals act in a sportsmanlike manner and manage the students in their dugout/bench area, their behavior sets a positive tone for players, spectators and others. Use of Props Like Bench Decorum, there is no logical purpose to have props at an education-based athletic event. They do not enhance the educational value of the contest. In fact, they deter from any valuable lesson gained from competing. Unlike the collegiate and professional models, the use of props or any items to demean or embarrass one’s opponent is contrary to the reason the NFHS writes playing rules for high school age and skilled students.
- Improper Use of Communication Equipment Last season was the first year of allowing one-way electronic communication devices from the dugout/bench to the catcher. It permits the coach to communicate with the catcher using an electronic communication device for the purpose of calling pitches and setting up the defense. The device would only be able to be one-way, meaning the player cannot use an electronic device to respond or communicate back to the coach. Various technologies, earpiece style, electronic band or a smart watch could be used giving schools several options at varying costs. No other player would be able to wear or use this device nor would the coach be able to communicate with any other player using electronic communication.

6. **ONLINE RULES REVIEW AND TEST** – ALL coaches (head, assistant, volunteer, etc.) must complete the Baseball Online Rules Review to meet the rules meeting requirement for being an “approved coach” on the schools coaches roster. The Baseball online rules review will open **February 24** and will close **March 14**. Coaches not completing the rules meeting requirement prior to the deadline will result in a \$50 fine to the school/coach. Reminder: All 7-12 MSHSAA member schools who have middle school coaches assisting with the high school program must list these coaches as both a middle school and a high school coach on the school's Coaches and Directors page of the MSHSAA website in order for these coaches to be considered “high school coaching staff”.
7. **APPROVAL/CONTRACTING OFFICIALS** (MSHSAA By-Law 6.1.1) - Officials shall be agreed upon by both schools at least 30 days before each contest. The host school is responsible for making sure certain officials are registered with MSHSAA. Officials shall be engaged by a written/electronic contract.
8. **SPECIAL REPORT FORMS** - Are on the MSHSAA website and are used by both the officials and the schools. They are to be used to report matters such as officiating procedures, game administration, unsportsmanlike conduct, etc., that need immediate attention. The report may be complimentary report as well. Officials SHALL penalize and file a special report for all unsportsmanlike conduct. Unsportsmanlike special reports must be filed for all levels of play (junior high, freshman, sophomore, junior varsity and varsity). Under Board of Directors policy, action will be taken against officials who fail to file a report of unsportsmanlike conduct.
9. **OFFICIALS RECOMMENDATIONS** - The rating system has been eliminated. The criteria for selection to MSHSAA postseason contests is located in the Officials Manual. With the elimination of the rating system, more emphasis will be placed on coaches recommendations/non-recommendations, observers evaluations and recommendations, association recommendations, and Officials Reports. The number of contests worked the current season and previous season will also be factors. Coaches will be mandated to provide a list of recommended/non-recommended umpires as part of their postseason registration process. District entries will not be completed without this information, as it is now more important than ever. Coaches must submit their Officials Recommendations for the postseason on the MSHSAA website by the established deadline. The more names supplied, the more beneficial the recommendations are to the District Managers and the MSHSAA staff.
10. **ENTERING SCORES/LISTING UMPIRES** - With the removal of the rating system, coaches entering the score of all varsity contests and the umpires working the contest will be a requirement. This information should be entered into the website within 24 hours of each game, and scores and umpires must be entered by the District Entry deadline. Coaches entering the umpires working the contest is the only way MSHSAA can track/monitor how many contests an umpire is working the current year and the previous year. This information is vital to the postseason selection process for both District Tournament Managers and MSHSAA.
11. **PROFESSIONALISM RESPONSIBILITIES** - Both Coaches and Officials are expected to be professional and business-like toward each other. This type of behavior is to prevail at all times, especially during and after the contest. Regardless of the outcome of the contest, there is no justification for coaches to ridicule officials. Host schools are to provide security for officials to ensure their safety and well-being. There is to be no admittance to officials' dressing rooms before, during or after contest unless by designated school authorities that is there on official business to carry out their assigned duties. Mutual respect and courtesy shown by both coaches and officials are the keys to providing the proper example and environment for our athletes, students and fans.
12. **SANCTIONING** (By-Law 3.18): Any time a MSHSAA member school competes in a tournament, by definition, with an out-of-state school(s) or in any event co-sponsored by any party other than a MSHSAA member school (e.g. a university, theme park, shoe company, etc.), a sanctioning request must be made through the MSHSAA website at least 30 calendar days prior to the event. If the event involves National Federation Sanctioning, an application must be completed at least 90 days prior to the event through the NFHS website ([www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org)). It is the event host's responsibility to obtain sanctioning, however, each participating MSHSAA member school shall take responsibility to verify that the sponsor has sanctioned the event prior to participation.

13. **MISSOURI ASSOCIATION ADOPTIONS AND REMINDERS ON KEY RULES** –Refer to the manual on the MSHSAA Baseball page (<https://www.mshsaa.org/Activities/Info/Baseball.aspx>) and NFHS Rules Book for conduct of contests.
- Game Length (BBL Manual 2.B)
    - 7 innings, but a regular season game may be considered official after 4½ innings due to inclement weather
    - Mercy Rules: 15 after 3 innings or 10 after 5 innings
    - Time Limit: *Regular Season Tournament Only* is 2½ hour
    - Sub-Varsity & JH: SCHOOLS may agree to reduce GAME length by inning count or time-limit ONLY
  - Speed-Up Rules: apply to COURTESY RUNNERS in the NFHS Baseball Rules Book.
  - Double First Base: A double first base **SHALL NOT** be used in any baseball game (no Missouri Adoption).
  - Protests: MSHSAA Board policy, all protests are to be resolved at the contest for **MISAPPLICATION OF A RULE**. Coaches have 10 minutes to produce the game rule or policy, which has been misapplied. Protests of judgement calls by an official shall not be heard.
  - Suspended game – Regular Season (BBL Manual 2.S.3): If enough innings have been played to determine a winner the game is considered final. If enough innings have not been played to determine a winner or the score is tied, the suspended game rules apply.
  - Player Equipment (NFHS Rules 1-3 & 5): It is the coaches' responsibility that all players are properly and legally equipped. This should be confirmed at the pregame meeting. An official warning **CANNOT** be issued at this time.
  - JH/MS Bat Standards: ***MSHSAA adopted bat standards for games contested solely involving 6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> grade students*** – refer to (BBL Manual 2.I.2).
  - NFHS Rule 6-1-6 – Pitching Limitations. The NFHS requires that each State Association develop its own pitching limitation based upon the number of actual pitches thrown. Coaches – keep track and be HONEST about the counts, umpires do not track. As part of your pre-game, it is good practice to share pitch count verification forms with each other. (See BBL Manual 2.L.2 for Missouri Pitching Adoptions)
14. **BATTER'S BOX.** Rule 7-3 1-7 - Each batter is expected to comply with this rule and every umpire is expected to enforce this rule.
15. **UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT/EJECTION/DISQUALIFICATION** (By-Law 5.5.1) - A player who is ejected from a contest for unsportsmanlike conduct shall at a minimum be prohibited from playing in the next interscholastic contest at that same level, but is allowed to stay in the dugout. A coach who is ejected during a contest for unsportsmanlike conduct shall at a minimum be prohibited from coaching and attending the next interscholastic contest for that team. A coach who is ejected shall leave the vicinity of the playing area immediately, out of sight and out of sound of that game (NFHS Rule 3-3) and the next game at that same level once warm-ups begin.
16. **UMPIRE POST SEASON SELECTION:** (*Only umpires registered for the post season may be selected*)
- District Umpire Draft – A host site will administer the draft for each of the seven (7) regions of the state. Each District Manager will be assigned to a draft site based on the location of their school. District Managers will be able to draft from multiple regions if the make-up of their district schools warrants and the request permission to do so.
  - State Series and Final Site –MSHSAA will select the umpires and designate crews for the all games beyond Districts.**
17. **POST SEASON DATES:**

| 2025           | Classes 1 & 2 | Classes 3 & 4 | Classes 5 & 6 |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Districts:     | May 15-24     | May 15-24     | May 21-26     |
| Sectionals:    | May 26        | May 27        | NONE          |
| Quarterfinals: | May 28        | May 29        | May 30-31     |
| State:         | June 2-3      | June 4-5      | June 6-7      |