

INTERFERENCE

By Matt Moore

NFHS Rules Philosophy

- ♦ 73 MLB umpires; 30 MLB teams
- ♦ 3,500 (?) college umpires; 1,650 college teams
- ♦ 50,000 HS umpires, more than 15,000 teams
 - ♦ Some areas have training, some areas just have Bubba and BillyBob wear backward hats and shinguards outside
 - ♦ Maintain consistency in rules to ease enforcement across the country

NFHS Rules Consistency

- ◆ Balks
 - ◆ All dead balls
 - ◆ All runners get one base
 - ◆ Pitch doesn't count
- ◆ Obstruction
 - ◆ Always live
 - ◆ Always at least one-base award to obstructed runner

Basic Interference Penalties

- ◆ Ball is dead
- ◆ Batter/Runner who interfered is called out
- ◆ All other runners return to last base touched at time of interference
- ◆ THERE ARE EXCEPTIONS

Types of Interference

- ◆ Offensive
 - ◆ Batter
 - ◆ Runner
 - ◆ Coach
 - ◆ On-Deck Hitter/Retired Runner
- ◆ Umpire
- ◆ Spectator

Offensive Interference

- ◆ Types of Interference
 - ◆ Physical
 - ◆ Verbal
- ◆ What must happen
 - ◆ Fielder must have been ... by the offensive player/coach
 - ◆ Obstructed
 - ◆ Impeded
 - ◆ Hindered
 - ◆ Confused
- ◆ Malicious contact (by runner)
- ◆ Coach physically assists

By Batter

- ◆ Two ways batter can interfere
 - ◆ Prevent a play at the plate
 - ◆ Runner trying to score
 - ◆ Prevent catcher from fielding third strike
 - ◆ Prevent catcher from attempting to throw out runner
 - ◆ Abnormal swing
 - ◆ Backswing

Batter: Play Scenarios

- ◆ Runner retired by initial throw
 - ◆ Ignore the interference
 - ◆ Any other advance by any other runner is legal
- ◆ Runner not retired by initial throw
 - ◆ Ball is dead immediately
 - ◆ Penalties are enforced

Batter: Penalties

- ◆ Two outs
 - ◆ Batter is out
 - ◆ Inning over, so placing runners is irrelevant; no runs score
- ◆ Less than two outs
 - ◆ Play at the plate
 - ◆ Runner out
 - ◆ All other runners return to last base touched at time of pitch
 - ◆ Batter remains at bat, same count
 - ◆ Play at any other base
 - ◆ Batter out
 - ◆ All other runners return to last base touched at time of pitch

Double Steal Plays

- ◆ Double steal plays
 - ◆ F2 throws to F5, R2 out at third: Play stands, R1 at second
 - ◆ F2 throws to F4, R1 out at second: Play stands, R2 at third
 - ◆ F2 double clutches, throws out R1 at second: Interference

NFHS Penalty ONLY

- ♦ Batter strikes out, interferes as he swung or walked away
- ♦ Runner stealing on pitch
- ♦ Runner is out ONLY if umpire believes runner would have been out on throw or play
- ♦ Otherwise runner returned to his base (no further penalty for interference)
- ♦ NCAA, Pro, Summer Leagues: Batter out, runner must be called out (there must be a penalty for interference)
- ♦ Matt's advice — Call the runner out. Penalize the offending team. **ALWAYS.**

Running Lane Interference

- ◆ Final 45 feet to first base
- ◆ Runner runs outside the lane
 - ◆ Runner considered outside if either foot is outside either line
 - ◆ Foot on the line (foul line or lane line) ... He's OK
- ◆ While ball is being fielded or thrown to first
 - ◆ Other rules codes: Interferes with fielder taking the throw at first base

Running Lane: Penalties

- ◆ Basic Penalties
- ◆ Don't try to figure out where runners were at exact time of interference — Penalize the offense
- ◆ Intervening play situation
- ◆ No runs can score if RLI was third out

By Batter or Runner

- ◆ Initial attempt by fielder
 - ◆ Fully protected
 - ◆ Runner must avoid interfering
- ◆ Secondary attempt by fielder
 - ◆ Fielding/recovering vs. Chasing
 - ◆ Fielder protected within a step and a reach
 - ◆ Otherwise, protection flips to offense (obstruction)
- ◆ Two Fielders
 - ◆ Umpire must determine which fielder is protected

Batter or Runner: Penalties

- ◆ Basic Penalty
- ◆ If Batter not out for interference, awarded first base

Special Runner Interferences

- ◆ Runner hit by batted ball
- ◆ Force play slide rule
- ◆ Interference to Prevent Double Play

Runner Hit by Batted Ball

- ◆ Must be fair ball
- ◆ Cannot be touched by any fielder
- ◆ Can have passed one fielder, but another fielder must be able to make a play on the ball (umpire judgment)
- ◆ Basic Penalties apply

Force Play Slide Rule

- ◆ Not just an interference rule, but also a safety rule
- ◆ Can occur at second (most common), third or home
- ◆ Runner is NEVER required to slide
- ◆ If runner slides, he must do so legally
 - ◆ Illegal slides include the runner:
 - ◆ Rolling, cross-body or pop-up slide into the fielder
 - ◆ Raised leg is higher than fielder's knee
 - ◆ Goes beyond base and makes contact/alters play
 - ◆ Runner slashes/kicks fielder
 - ◆ Runner, on a force play, does not slide on the ground and in a direct line between the two bases.
 - ◆ A runner may slide or run in a direction away from the fielder

FPSR: Penalties

- ◆ More than the Basic Penalties
- ◆ Runner who violated rule is out
- ◆ Batter-runner is out
- ◆ All other runners return

Break Up Double Play

- ♦ Judgment of umpire
- ♦ Any interference that prevents a double play
- ♦ The runner who interfered is out and the other runner involved

Coach Interference

- ◆ No coach shall physically assist a runner during playing action
 - ◆ Physical assist: helped or attempted to help
 - ◆ Mere act of touching does not count
 - ◆ Playing action: live ball

Coach Interference: Penalties

- ◆ Basic Penalties Do Not Apply
- ◆ Ball is dead at the end of playing action
- ◆ Runner who was assisted is immediately out
- ◆ Any other outs on the play stand
- ◆ **NFHS only:** All other runners return to last legally touched base at time of interference.

On-Deck Hitter or Retired Runner

- ♦ If a runner could have been put out, umpire shall declare that runner out
- ♦ Umpire uncertain who would have been played on, runner closest to home shall be called out

Umpire Interference

- ◆ Two types
- ◆ Fair batted ball hits umpire
 - ◆ Can't have been touched by a fielder
 - ◆ Can't have passed **ANY** fielder other than pitcher
- ◆ Umpire interferes with catcher attempting to throw
 - ◆ Catcher steps on umpire's foot
 - ◆ Catcher's arm hits umpire

Umpire: Penalties

- ◆ Umpire Hit by Batted Ball
 - ◆ Ball is immediately dead
 - ◆ Batter awarded first
 - ◆ All other runners return to TOP base unless forced to advance
- ◆ Umpire interferes with catcher's throw
 - ◆ Ball remains live until end of play
 - ◆ If catcher's throw retires runner, ignore interference
 - ◆ If not, ball dead immediately, all runners return

Spectator Interference

- ◆ Spectators where they are supposed to be
 - ◆ If a player is reaching over/around a fence line, that is NOT interference
- ◆ Spectators reaching over, interferes with fielder making a play or touches ball
 - ◆ Ball dead
 - ◆ Outs or bases awarded in judgment of umpire
 - ◆ Spectator is NOT ejected (game management)

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