I. Review and discuss the following 2011-2012 Rules Changes for Softball and the information concerning those changes for softball. (Please see comments on the rules changes in the Rule Book, page 82, for further information and rationale for each rule change.)

1-3-1 The color “white” was removed from the list of permissible colors for softballs. All softballs used for competition must now be optic yellow.

1-5-2a The requirement that the bat knob protrude at a 90-degree angle from the handle was removed.

3-2-5 Headwear requirements were revised and clarified. Headwear (caps, visors, headbands, ribbons, etc.) may be mixed, but if worn, they must be white, black, beige or school colors (the colors are not required to be the same for team members). The logo may be any color. Flat items, no longer than 2 inches, used to control the hair, such as bobby pins, barrettes and hair clips are permitted. Plastic visors, bandannas and hair-beads are prohibited.

7-4-2 Penalty A more severe penalty was added when a batter has used an altered or non-approved bat. In addition to an out being called on the batter, the batter and head coach will be ejected from the contest.

II. Please review the 2011-2012 Major Editorial Revisions for Softball

1-5-1c Clarified that shaving, rolling or artificially warming the bat barrel are prohibited.

2-4 The definitions of legal and illegal bats were revised and updated.

2-5-3, 3-5-6, 7-5 New, 7-4-12, 8-6-15, 8-6-16 New Several rules were updated and reorganized to clarify offensive interference.

3-13-2 NOTE The Note was revised to clarify that state associations may grant exceptions to NFHS playing rules for participants with disabilities, special needs and/or extenuating circumstances.

8-9-2 New Exception The courtesy runner procedure was clarified.

10-1-2 New Note A note was added clarifying the administrative responsibilities of umpires through the completion of required reports.
III. Please review the **Major Mechanics Changes (2012-2013 Two Year Manual)**

There were no major changes to the NFHS Softball Mechanics for the 2012-2013 Edition, however, several portions of the manual were edited and reorganized for clarity and consistency.

IV. Please review and discuss last year’s rule changes, major editorial revisions and major mechanics revisions. Were there any problems, concerns, or unusual situations caused by these changes?

**Rule Changes (Last Year)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rule Change</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3-1-3 Penalty</td>
<td>Added a new penalty of a team warning and then restriction to the dugout/bench area for a head coach who submits a lineup card that must be subsequently corrected with a proper name/number or substitutes added.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-3-9; 10-2-3k</td>
<td>Changed the guidelines and procedures for identifying and removing a player who exhibits signs, symptoms and/or behaviors consistent with a concussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-6-18</td>
<td>Changed that intent need not be the determining factor in ruling whether interference has occurred by a runner who has scored/been retired.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please review the following information in the **NFHS Softball Guide 2012** (this study guide was mailed in early February) concerning the 2012 rule changes:

**“2011 NFHS Rules Changes Review” – page 3**

**Major Editorial Revisions (Last Year)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revisions</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>Reorganized the glove rule and clarified that any gray, white or optic colored marking that gives the appearance of a ball is not permitted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-24-4</td>
<td>Added the exception of touching home to clarify the force-play reinstatement rule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-2-13</td>
<td>Clarified the padding requirements for guards, casts and braces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-2-2; 6-4-5</td>
<td>Clarified that powdered resin or any comparable drying agent is permitted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-5 New</td>
<td>Moved the ball-rotation procedure from 4-1-4 to new 6-5.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

V. The NFHS Softball Rules Committee has identified three points for emphasis this year. These points of emphasis will be discussed during the online Softball Rules Clinic but please review and discuss these points of emphasis as a group.

Please review the comments for each point of emphasis listed in the Rule Book, pages 83-84:

1) Pitching
   a) Pitching Regulations
   b) 24-inch Width Infractions

2) Legal Apparel and Equipment
   a) Equipment Check
   b) Pitchers Uniform

3) On-Deck Batter’s Location
Also, please review the Points of Emphasis from last year:

1) Sportsmanship  
2) Team and Player Equipment  
3) Field of Play  
4) Game Management

VI. Please review and discuss the following information in the **NFHS Softball Guide 2012** concerning the new rule changes this year - this study guide was mailed in early February with the **MOA Official Word**:

- Bat Penalty Increased For Players, Coaches – page 1  
- White No Longer An Option For Softballs – page 2  
- Ax-Shaped Bat Handle Gets OK’d – page 5  
- Added Leeway with Headwear Requirements – page 5

VII. Review once again the following MHSA procedure for MOA officials to follow in regard to these concussions and other injuries (this information is provided in the addendum to these study clubs after Study Club # 4):

VIII. Review once again the DP/Flex Rule (this information is provided in the addendum to these study clubs after Study Club # 4)

Completed outline must be signed by all present and sent to the regional director by May 15, 2012.
I. Please discuss and review the following information on the Major Editorial Revisions for this year found in the *NFHS Softball Guide 2012* (including the plays and situations included in the articles).

   1. **Bat Revisions, and Various Clarifications** – pages 2-3
   2. **Offensive Team Interference Rule Revised** – page 13

II. Review and discuss the following information from the *NFHS Softball Guide 2012* on this year's Points of Emphasis:

   - **Proper Equipment** – “Onus is On Coaches” – page 4
   - **Pitching Regulations** – Violations Remain a Concern – page 6
   - **Safety Top Priority for On-Deck Batters** – page 6

III. Please discuss and review the following information on a variety of topics from the *NFHS Softball Guide 2012*.

   - **Take Note When an Injury Occurs** – page 10
   - **After the Game, Keep it Zipped** – page 10
   - **Guidelines for a Well-Kept Lineup Card** – pages 10-11
   - **Six Safety Tips to Remember in Every Game** (excellent article – page 11)

     1) Enforce all rules relative to player safety strictly and without deviation.
     2) Any time a rule requires umpires to ask questions and get answers: Ask questions and get answers.
     3) Act intelligently and consistently, employing the principle of player safety in enforcing the rules.
     4) Never make up your own rules regarding player safety or attempt to explain the consequences of one course of action or another to anyone.
     5) Take great care in documenting your prudent and correct enforcement of all safety rules, but leave out extraneous material in game reports.
     6) Don’t assume anyone else will take responsibility if an injury occurs.
IV. TEST YOURSELF - March 2012

In each of the following, you are given a situation and at least two possible answers. You are to decide with answer or answers are correct according to NFHS Rules:

1. B1 swings and contacts the ball, which goes directly to F2’s glove.
   a. It’s a foul tip when caught, if the ball never rises on its way from the bat to the catcher’s glove.
   b. It’s a foul tip when caught, if the ball never rises above the batter’s head.
   c. It’s a foul tip if the ball is legally caught after a perceptible arc.
   d. The ball is live if legally caught by F2.
   e. The ball is dead on a foul tip.
   f. Any fielder can legally catch a foul tip.

2. The visiting coach asks about the hoe team pitcher’s feet in relation to the pitcher’s plate.
   a. Only one foot is required on the pitcher’s plate prior to delivery.
   b. Two feet are required to be on or in contact with the pitcher’s plate prior to delivery.
   c. A backward step may be taken after the hands come together.
   d. A backward step may be taken before the hands come together.
   e. No backward step may be taken.
   f. The backward step may end before or after the hands come together.

3. With R1 on first base, B2 hits a slow ground ball to F6. F6’s throw to first is wide and goes into dead-ball area. R1 had reached second base at the time of the throw.
   a. Award R1 home.
   b. Award R1 third.
   c. Award B2 second.
   d. Award B2 third.

4. R3 is on third, R2 on second and R1 is on first with two outs. B1 hits a triple. However, R1 misses third base and is then declared out on proper appeal.
   a. No runs score.
   b. One run scores.
   c. Two runs score.
   d. The out declared on R1 is a force out.

5. B1 hits a single to center field. F8 throws the ball toward F4 as B1 rounds first. As B1 slows down, B1 accidentally bumps into F3.
   a. Obstruction has occurred.
   b. Interference has occurred.
   c. The ball is immediately dead.
   d. The ball is delayed-dead.
   e. B1 is awarded first base.
   f. B1 is awarded second base.
   g. That is incidental contact.

V. Please review and discuss the following 2012 NFHS Softball Rules Interpretations:

**SITUATION 1:** The home team provides the umpire with three pink softballs, all labeled with the NFHS Authenticating Mark, for use during a special fundraiser game. **RULING:** Illegal softballs. The softballs have been illegally labeled by the manufacturer with the NFHS Authenticating Mark as softballs are required to be optic yellow. The home team shall provide legal optic yellow softballs to the umpire for the contest. The “promotion” softballs may be used for warm-ups, etc., but not for competition. (1-3-1; 1-3-8)
**SITUATION 2:** The right fielder has a pouch-like product attached to her glove designed to keep the throwing hand warm during cold-weather play. **RULING:** The equipment is legal provided it meets all the glove specifications listed in Rule 1-4, especially the two-color requirement. (1-4)

**SITUATION 3:** The umpire notices that B1’s bat has a crack in the barrel (a) before she steps into the batter’s box or (b) after she steps in the batter’s box. **RULING:** In (a), B1 may obtain a legal bat without penalty. In (b), B1 would be declared out for using an illegal bat. No ejections occur unless the umpire deems the bat has been altered (structurally changed) by a device/treatment to enhance performance. In both (a) and (b), the illegal bat is removed from the game and the umpire issues a warning to the head coach. The next player not properly equipped will result in the player and the head coach being restricted to the dugout/bench for the duration of the game. (1-5-1c; 2-4-2; 3-6-1; 7-4-2)

**SITUATION 4:** With two outs and R1 on third base, B4 steps into the batter’s box with a bat that is manufactured with holes in the taper of the bat and bears the 2004 ASA Certification Mark. **RULING:** B4 is declared out. **COMMENT:** It is the responsibility of the umpires to inspect equipment before the game. If the umpires find a bat not in compliance with Rule 1-5, the team should have the opportunity to make the bat legal or it shall be removed from play. (1-5-2c; 2-4-2; 7-4-2)

**SITUATION 5:** During the pregame inspection of equipment, the umpires notice several bats in the home team’s dugout that are very warm to the touch. The umpires remove the bats from play. In the fifth inning, the home team asks the umpire to check the bats again to see if they have cooled off enough to use for the remainder of the game. **RULING:** Incorrect procedure. Once an altered bat has been removed from the game, it should remain out of play for the entire contest. (2-4-2a; 3-2-10 Penalty; 10-2-3a)

**SITUATION 6:** R1 is at third base and R2 is at first base with no outs. B3, an illegal offensive player, hits the ball to F6, an illegal defensive player, who turns a 6-4-3 double play. R1 crosses the plate. At the end of playing action, before the next pitch, both coaches come out and appeal the opponent's illegal player. **COMMENT:** Since this situation is unlikely to occur, there is no specific rule/penalty to address it; therefore, the umpire must make a decision as in 10-2-3g. The most likely rulings would appear to advantage one team over the other and it is impossible to invoke penalties that are completely “offsetting.” Therefore, one possible “hybrid” ruling is presented for consideration. **ONE POSSIBLE RULING:** Since both teams violated the illegal substitute rule and the violations were discovered before the next pitch, the umpire shall restrict both the illegal offensive and defensive players to the bench/dugout for the remainder of the game with legal substitutes replacing them. It would seem “fair” to call B3 out and return both R1 and R2 to third base and first base, respectively. The game would continue with one out and the player following the illegal batter as the next batter. This penalty incorporates portions from the two individual penalties. (2-57-3; 3-4-2 Penalty; 3-4-3 Penalty; 10-2-3g)

VI. **Pitching Information** - Attached to this Study Club is information that has been shared with coaches and umpires for many years regarding pitching– please take time to review this information once again (this information is provided in the addendum to these study clubs after Study Club # 4):

VII. Orally, as a group, take the following 2011 Softball Rules Exam – Part I. Discuss any problem areas and please note the questions that may be affected by this year’s rule changes.
2011 FAST PITCH SOFTBALL RULES EXAMINATION – PART 1

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Instructions: Some questions are multiple choice. Please select only one answer for multiple-choice questions. For true-false questions, mark “A” for true and “B” for false. **NOTE:** In the exam situations, F refers to a fielder, B refers to a batter and R refers to a runner. All situations and acts are legal, and no errors or mistakes are involved unless otherwise noted.

**Baserunning**

1. When a double first base is used, the runner may use the white portion of the bag if there is a force out attempt from the foul side of first base.
2. A runner is considered to be in the three-foot running lane when she has one foot touching inside the lane and one foot touching on the line.
3. A batter-runner who reaches first base safely and then overruns or overslides the base may always return to that base without liability to be put out.
4. If a runner is tagged out between the two bases where she was obstructed, the runner is awarded the base(s) she would have reached had there been no obstruction.
5. If a runner is obstructed while returning to a base that she missed or left too soon, she is protected.
6. R1 is on first base; B2 is at bat with an 0-2 count and no outs. B2 swings at a third strike that is dropped by the catcher. B2 runs toward first base. As R1 is diving back to first base, B2 is hit in the back with F2’s throw to first base and the ball goes out of play. What is the result of the play?
   a. B2 is awarded second base; R1 is awarded third base.
   b. B2 is declared out for interference; R1 remains at first base.
   c. B2 is declared out for interference; R1 is awarded second base.
   d. B2 has struck out; R1 remains at first base.
   e. B2 has struck out and is charged with interference; R1 is declared out.
7. Runners are permitted to return to a missed base or a base left too soon before a dead-ball appeal can be made.
8. A runner is out if she passes an obstructed preceding runner.

**Batting**

9. An improper batter is considered to be at bat as soon as she enters the batter's box and one pitch has been thrown.
10. When an improper batter becomes a runner or is put out, all outs made on the play stand if the defensive team properly appeals.
11. Following batter’s interference with the catcher, the penalty enforcement will be based on the number of outs.
12. The batter is declared out if the offensive team's coach interferes with F5’s attempt to field a foul fly ball.
13. The batter is out if, while in the batter’s box with the bat in her hand, the bat accidentally hits the ball a second time.
14. The batter is out when she throws her bat and interferes with a defensive player attempting a play.
15. With a runner on first base and less than two outs, F2 must catch the third strike in flight for the batter to be out.
16. The batter is awarded first base if a pitched ball strikes the ground and then contacts the batter, provided the ball isn't swung at or called a strike.

**Bench and Field Conduct**

17. Metal cleats are permitted and must be round or rectangular.
18. Illegal equipment must be removed or made legal.
19. A player deliberately removing a batting helmet when it is required to be worn shall immediately be restricted to the dugout/bench for the remainder of the game.
20. A coach may be in possession of electronic communication devices in the coaching box, provided they are being used for coaching purposes.
21. A strike/ball is called on the batter and a team warning is issued to the offense/defense when that team intentionally removes a boundary line on the field of play.
22. Only the offense can be penalized for malicious contact.
23. A team warning shall be issued for a player faking a tag without the ball.
24. A team warning is issued and the next offender restricted to the dugout for entering the contest unreported.

**Charged Conferences**
25. Each team, when on defense, may be granted not more than three charged conferences without penalty during a seven-inning game.
26. A coach who calls time, goes out to speak with F6 and then replaces F1, is charged with a defensive conference.
27. If F2 goes out to confer with F1, a defensive conference is charged.
28. Time granted for an incapacitated player shall constitute a charged conference for the offense or defense.
29. During a defensive-charged conference, the offensive team may meet provided the non-charged conference concludes when the charged conference ends or doesn't delay the game.

**Coaching**
30. Prior to the start of the game at the pregame conference, the head coach shall be responsible for verifying which of the following?
   a. That the lineup card is correct.
   b. That all players are legally equipped.
   c. That players and equipment are in compliance with all NFHS rules.
   d. B and C only.
   e. All of the above.
31. A team member ejected for unsporting conduct may occupy a coach's box.
32. Only adults may occupy the coach's box.
33. Coaches performing duties in live-ball territory must be attired in school colors, khaki, black, white or gray.
34. A coach not dressed in appropriate attire may be permitted on the field of play if he/she remedies the situation.
35. If a coach physically assists a runner during playing action, the assisted runner is out and any other additional outs on the play stand at the end of playing action.
36. When offensive team personnel interfere by being near a base to which a runner is advancing, the ball is dead and the runner closest to home is out.
37. If a base coach intentionally removes a coach's box boundary line, a strike is charged to the batter and a team warning issued.

**Courtesy Runners**
38. To utilize a courtesy runner in the top of the first inning, the pitcher and catcher are identified as those players listed in the lineup as playing those positions; both must occupy those positions in the bottom of the first inning until the first batter has completed her turn at bat.
39. The same courtesy runner may not be used for both the pitcher and catcher in the same game.
40. If an injury occurs and no other substitutes are available, the courtesy runner must be used as a substitute.
41. When a legal substitute replaces a courtesy runner, the player for whom she was running has left the game.
42. A courtesy runner may run for another courtesy runner.
43. If a courtesy runner fails to report, she is considered an unreported substitute.

**Dead Ball**
44. The ball becomes dead immediately when a pitch touches a batter or her clothing.
45. A delayed dead-ball situation occurs when the ball comes in contact with the bat a second time.
46. The ball becomes dead immediately when a batted ball, while on or over foul ground, first touches the catcher's glove or hand.
47. A delayed dead-ball situation occurs when the umpire interferes with the catcher who is attempting to throw a non-batted ball.
48. After a dead-ball situation, the ball becomes live when it is held by the pitcher within the 16-foot circle and the umpire signals "play ball."

49. The softball field includes an elevated cement step in front of each dugout. B1 hits a foul fly caught by F3 such that her right foot is on the ground completely in live-ball territory and her left foot is on the elevated cement step with half the foot on the step and the other half over live-ball territory but completely off the ground. What is the result of the play?
   a. B1 is out on a good catch by F3; the ball is live and in play.
   b. Foul ball; the ball is dead; B1 remains at bat.
   c. B1 is out on a good catch by F3; the ball is dead.
   d. Foul ball; the ball is live and in play; B1 remains at bat.
   e. None of the above.

Definitions

50. All of the following are true regarding the catcher's box, EXCEPT:
   a. The catcher must be in the catcher's box from the time the pitcher steps on the pitcher's plate until she releases the pitch.
   b. The catcher's box is a rectangle.
   c. The catcher's box is 8 feet, 5 inches wide.
   d. The catcher's box is 10 feet deep.
   e. The catcher's box includes the area directly behind home plate, between the batter's boxes.

51. During the pregame conference between umpires, coaches and team captains, no balls may be hit or thrown in live-ball territory.

52. A runner's base path is always defined as a direct line between two bases and three feet on either side of that line.

53. A fielder is considered to be making an initial play if the batted ground ball deflects off the pitcher.

54. A slide is illegal if the runner's raised leg is higher than the fielder's knee when the fielder is in a standing position.

55. An on-deck batter may use either the circle nearest her own dugout or the circle nearest the opponent's dugout.

56. A strike may be called by the umpire for specific actions by the batter or offense.

57. In establishing the validity of a catch, the fielder must only hold the ball long enough to prove she has control.

DP/FLEX

58. After the DP/FLEX option is declared at the pregame conference with the submission/verification of the lineup card, a team may be go down to nine players before the first pitch is thrown.

59. The DP starts as one of the nine hitters in the batting order.

60. The role of the DP is terminated for the rest of the game when the FLEX bats.

61. Placing the FLEX into one of the first nine positions in the lineup for someone other than the DP's position is considered an illegal substitution.

62. All of the following are true regarding the FLEX player, EXCEPT:
   a. The FLEX is listed in the 10th position in the lineup.
   b. The FLEX may be substituted for by the DP playing defense.
   c. The FLEX may bat anywhere in one of the nine positions of the batting order.
   d. The FLEX may be replaced by a legal substitute at any time.
   e. When the FLEX is substituted for, the team is down to nine players.

63. The DP may be substituted for at any time by:
   a. A legal substitute.
   b. The FLEX playing offense.
   c. Anyone else in the batting order.
   d. A and B only.
   e. All of the above.

Field and Equipment

64. All of the following are true regarding a legal softball field, EXCEPT:
   a. The field shall be free of obstructions between the foul lines.
b. The field shall contain an infield diamond.
c. The field shall contain an outfield area enclosed by a fence.
d. The bases are 60 feet apart when a 12-inch ball is used.
e. The pitching distance is 43 feet for female fast-pitch games.

65. Which of the following is true regarding foul lines?
a. Foul lines extend beyond the bases.
b. Foul lines extend to the outfield fence.
c. Foul lines extend to a minimum of 185 feet when an outfield fence is not present.
d. Foul lines should be 2½ inches wide.
e. All of the above.

66. All lines on the field shall be marked with what color material?
a. Green.
b. White.
c. Yellow.
d. Pink.
e. All of the above colors are permitted.

67. All of the following are true regarding a double-first base, EXCEPT:
a. A double-first base is required nationally.
b. The double-first base shall be a one- or two-piece unit.
c. The double-first base shall be 15 inches by 30 inches total.
d. The double-first base shall be manufactured to be of equal height.
e. The base in foul territory shall be a color other than white.

68. The pitching distance is measured from the rear tip of home plate to back edge of the pitcher’s plate.

69. A circle 16 feet in diameter shall be drawn around the pitcher’s plate.

70. If space allows, the on-deck circles should be 30 feet from home plate.

71. Once a game has started, if it is discovered that the pitching distance is incorrect, the correction shall be made immediately.

72. Bases shall be securely attached to the ground or an anchor system.

73. The pitcher’s plate shall be a rectangular white slab that is 24 inches by 6 inches.

74. Use of treatments or devices that alter the bat specifications or enhance performance render the bat illegal.

75. Batting helmets must have extended ear flaps that cover both ears and temples.

76. If worn on the batting helmet, an eye shield must be clear and permit 100 percent allowable light transmission.

**Pitching Regulations**

77. The pitcher may legally remove herself from the pitcher’s plate before or after the hands come together by stepping back from the plate with both feet.

78. A pitcher may not exceed 1½ revolutions of the arm in the windmill motion.

79. When a pitcher fails to deliver the pitch within the required timeframe, a ball is called on the batter.

80. Provided it is under the supervision and control of the umpire, which of the following is legal for a pitcher to use on the pitching hand:
   a. Tape.
   b. Saliva.
   c. Powdered resin or any comparable drying agent.
   d. Rock resin.
   e. All of the above.

81. All of the following are true regarding the ball rotation, EXCEPT:
   a. A pitcher has a choice of balls at the start of each half-inning if both balls have been in play.
   b. The unused ball must be put into play in the bottom of the first inning if it is not used in the top of the first inning.
   c. The ball in play should be returned to the 16-foot circle after every half-inning.
   d. The pitcher may possess both balls and choose the one she wants to start that half-inning.
   e. All of the above.
**Player Uniforms, Equipment**

82. Which of the following is true regarding knee and ankle braces that are unaltered from the manufacturer's original design/production?
   a. They do not require any additional padding/covering.
   b. They must be covered with athletic tape.
   c. They must be padded with ½-inch-thick foam.
   d. They are permitted with a doctor's note.
   e. All of the above.

83. Hard and unyielding items (guards, casts, braces, splints, etc.) must be padded with:
   a. A closed-cell, slow-recovery foam.
   b. One-inch thick padding.
   c. Athletic tape.
   d. A gauze pad.
   e. A rubberized material.

84. Jewelry that is judged to be "soft" by an umpire may be worn by a player.

85. Unadorned devices, such as bobby pins, barrettes and hair clips may be worn to control a player's hair provided they do not exceed one inch.

**Players, Positions**

86. The pitcher is also known as fielding position No. 2 or F2.

87. All fielders, except the catcher, must be on fair ground at the time of the pitch.

88. A player may change to a different fielding position at any time, except the pitcher, who may only be removed and return to pitch once per inning.

89. A team's lineup card must include all of the following, EXCEPT:
   a. First initial and last names.
   b. Jersey numbers.
   c. Position being played.
   d. Batting order of starting players.
   e. First initial and last name of coach.

90. All of the following will result in a team warning to the head coach for submitting an inaccurate lineup card, EXCEPT:
   a. Changing a player's name.
   b. Changing a player's number.
   c. Adding a player.
   d. Adding a substitute.
   e. Changing a player's position.

**Substituting**

91. Any player who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion shall not return to play until cleared by:
   a. The head coach.
   b. A parent or guardian.
   c. The athletic director.
   d. An appropriate health-care professional.
   e. None of the above.

92. F1 and F6 may switch defensive positions any number of times in the same half-inning.

93. A player not listed as an eligible substitute on the lineup card shall be prohibited from playing.

94. Whenever an illegal offensive substitute is discovered on base, she is called out and restricted to the dugout/bench.

**Umpiring**

95. The plate umpire shall make all decisions except those commonly reserved for the field umpire.

96. The plate umpire may rectify any situation in which an umpire's decision that was reversed has placed either team in jeopardy.

97. Umpires working the plate are required to wear a mask, throat protector and chest protector.

98. Umpire jurisdiction begins:
a. Upon the arrival of one umpire within the confines of the field.
b. Upon the arrival of two umpires within the confines of the field.
c. When the pregame conference begins.
d. Upon the conclusion of the pregame conference.
e. Upon the arrival of one umpire to the facility/park/school.

99. Umpire jurisdiction ends at the conclusion of the game when:
   a. The umpires leave the field of play.
   b. The umpires leave the visual confines of the facility.
   c. The umpires are in the parking lot or school building.
   d. The third out is declared in the final half-inning.
   e. The umpires are sure no final appeal will be made.

100. The umpire shall immediately remove a player from the game who exhibits the following signs or symptoms of a concussion:
   a. Dizziness.
   b. Confusion.
   c. Headache.
   d. Loss of consciousness.

Completed outline must be signed by all present and sent to the regional director by May 15, 2012.
I. Please review the following articles from the *NFHS Softball Guide 2012* regarding Umpiring Mechanics. These articles provide excellent information regarding specific NFHS mechanics for softball:

- Tag Play at Third Covered by the Plate Umpire – page 4
- Play at the Plate – (great diagram and information) – page 8
- Precious Memories: Mental Replay An Effective Use of Calling Plays and Pitches- p 9
- Two Umpire System – the Read Step – page 11
- Clear Catcher When Ball Gets Away – page 13
- When It’s Time to Think Outside the Box – page 14

II. MECHANICS AND MORE MECHANICS - Please review the following information that has been included in previous study clubs over the years regarding umpiring mechanics:

Please review once again the following Major Softball Manual Revisions from the 2010-2011 season:

1. Navy blue slacks were added as a uniform option. Montana will allow for the use of either navy blue or heather gray slacks but all umpires on the crew must wear the same color.

2. Positioning for a field umpire was changed back to being no closer than 18 feet from the base for force plays. This provides a better angle on force plays to see all elements: the ball, the base, the offense and the defense.

3. Between innings, the plate umpire will now take a position facing the field at the first baseline extended when the team in the first-base dugout is coming to bat and the third baseline extended when the team in the third base dugout is coming to bat.

Please review once again the following umpire mechanics Points of Emphasis from the 2010-2011 season:

1) Trailing the Batter - Plate umpires must make it a habit to trail the batter-runner
   This assists the base umpire with:
   - A pulled foot
   - A bobbled catch
   - A swiped tag
   Remember – Exit to the left of the catcher to avoid a possible collision
2) Walking the Line - Field umpires should walk the line with no runners on base – Providing a smoother transition when the ball is hit and the umpire must move to the next position

3) Holding up Play - Use the do-not-pitch signal when the pitcher appears ready to pitch, but the batter is not in the batter’s box. This is preventative umpiring and may avoid a “no pitch” or an “illegal pitch”

**And:** Please always take time to review and discuss all areas in the **Umpires Manual** — dealing with proper mechanics – proper mechanics are critical and yearly review is necessary for rookie umpires but also very valuable for veteran umpires. The manual breaks down specific areas including responsibilities of the plate umpire and the field umpire and contains detailed explanations of different umpire systems.

### III. Infield Fly Basics

Referee Magazine recently ran an article "Infield Fly Basics, Avoid Confusion By Knowing Philosophies, Not Just the Rule." Please review the following information from that article -

**Two Unwavering Philosophies — absolute guidelines**

1) **Is an infield-are pop up a batted ball that could enable the fielders to execute an underserved double play if the ball isn’t caught?**

2) **Is a fielder in the infield area settled comfortably underneath the ball?** Note: An infield-area pop up can sometimes include part of the outfield if the two guidelines are met. That depends, of course, upon the level of play of the participants.

Don’t call an infield fly until both of those requirements are met. An infield fly should not be declared before a fly ball reaches its apex, but it may be called seconds later when an umpire judges the ball is an infield fly.

**Questions to ask:**

1) **Who are infielders regarding infield fly situations?** All infielders, including the pitcher and catcher and any outfielder stationed in the infield at the time of the pitch or an outfielder who enters the infield area playing a batted ball are considered infielders for the purpose of this rule.

2) **What are the infield fly signals?** Crew members must place their open palmed hand across the opposite chest in an umpire-to-umpire confirmation signal. Other signals can include the touching of the bill of the hat with index finger extended, double tap of the hand on top of the cap and showing a thumbs up-closed fist signal or using both thumbs up signal. You need to talk before to agree on the signal. When an infield fly is judged the umpire will extend his or her arm overhead with the index finger pointing upward. After verbally declaring the infield fly, the umpire will clinch the extended hand into a fist.

When the infield fly is no longer in effect, an umpire-to-umpire signal is used with a wiping motion on the forearm from the elbow to the wrist.

3) **Who calls an infield fly?** Shared coverage mechanics – either umpire can initially declare an infield fly except a fly ball hit near a foul line – that should be the plate umpire making the call.

4) **Ask yourself – can this ball be caught by a fielder with ordinary effort?** However, avoid thinking – “should this ball be caught by a fielder with ordinary effort?”

5) **Runner’s rights – runners have the tight to run at their peril on a declared infield fly or they may tag and attempt to advance on any caught infield fly.**

6) **What happens when infield fly drops?** The calling umpire should dramatically and assertively confirm the call by loudly calling, “That’s an infield fly! The batter is out! Bunts or line drives cannot be an infield fly.”
7) Umpires erroneously fail to call the infield fly - the infield fly should be retroactively declared after the fact.

8) Intentionally dropped infield fly – the rule takes precedent – the batter is out and ball is live and in play.

Did You Know? – History of the Infield Fly – the rule was instituted in 1895 to prevent the defensive team from employing shenanigans and unsporting schemes to gain an undeserved double play on routine pop flies in the infield. The rule was only in effect when there was one out but was revised in 1901 to also be in effect with no outs.

And, please review the plate mechanics information (this information is provided in the addendum to these study clubs after Study Club # 4):

IV. The MHSA office continues to receive concerns from umpires and teams regarding difficult weather conditions. Rain and impending darkness are two major culprits. High winds, lightning and thunder can be troublesome. Please review as a pool your procedures for determining when a game should be suspended or called for any condition.


Please review Rule 4-2 (Articles 1-6 – pages 40-41) in the 2012 NFHS Softball Rules Book in regard to Ending a Game. (Montana state adoptions regarding ending a game are listed in Study Club # 4).

V. Communicable Disease and Skin Infection Procedures – with the emergence of MRSA and other blood borne infectious diseases please review the NFHS policy listed on page 90, Appendix D in the 2012 NFHS Softball Rules Book.

VI. Please review and discuss your pregame meeting and what will be discussed and what is required (team equipment legal and uniforms properly worn) – remember head coaches must attend this meeting and the game cannot continue until the head coach is present.

Review and discuss your procedures for communicating ground rules to each team at the pregame conference. Discuss with pool members the ground rules associated with each field your group works at during the season. Please review Rule 4-1-3 – Ground Rules in the 2012 NFHS Softball Rules Book on page 40.

VII. WHAT’S THE CALL? Test Yourself – February, 2012
In each of the following, you are given a situation and at least two possible answers. You are to decide with answer or answers are correct according to NFHS rules.

1. Regarding the look-back rule:
   a. The runner may legally leave her base when the pitcher’s non-pivot foot passes the front edge of the pitcher’s plate.
   b. The runner may legally leave her base when the pitched ball touches the ground.
   c. The runner may legally leave her base when the pitch leaves the pitcher’s hand.
   d. If a runner violates the rule by leaving too soon on a pitch, the ball is immediately dead.
   e. If a runner violates the rule by leaving too soon on a pitch, the ball is delayed-dead.
2. R1 remains upright and crashes into F5.
   a. R1 is out if F5 is holding the ball waiting to apply a tag.
   b. R1 is always out if the collision is malicious.
   c. R1 is out if F5 is holding the ball and the collision is deliberate and with great force.
   d. R1 is ejected.
   e. R1 is ejected if the collision is flagrant.
   f. R1 is ejected if the collision is malicious.
   g. The ball is dead.

3. B1 hits a declared infield fly near the third-base foul line.
   a. The proper call is, “Infield fly if fair; the batter is out!”
   b. If the ball falls untouched to the ground on foul territory and bounces fair between home and third, it is not an infield fly.
   c. Rule a dead ball if any fielder intentionally drops a fair fly ball.
   d. Declare the batter out when any fielder intentionally drops a fair fly ball.
   e. Rule the batter out if a fair fly ball is not caught.
   f. Call the ball foul if it settles untouched on foul territory.

4. After drawing a base on balls, B1 overruns first before returning to the base.
   a. B1 is out if tagged while off base.
   b. It is legal for B1 to overrun first.
   c. B1 is out immediately for passing first base.
   d. B1 must turn toward foul ground to avoid being put out.
   e. B1 is always in jeopardy if B1 turns toward fair territory when returning to first.

Completed outline must be signed by all present and sent to the regional director by May 15, 2012.
I. Please review the bat enforcement procedure put in place a few years ago – Coaches do not have to carry an approved bat list any longer but umpires have to carry a non-approved bat list to cross check each team’s bats even though the bat has the 2000 or 2004 mark.

II. The National Federation allows states to alter certain rules – Review the following alterations that the MHSA Executive Board has approved for adoption by our state:

1. Double first bases are mandatory – rules for utilizing the double first base have been moved back into the body of the rules. Please review rule 8-10 on pages 71-72 of the Rules Book.

2. (4-2-3) Game ending procedures:
   a) Employ a minimum 1 ½ hour time limit to end games at **invitational tournaments (with a new addition this year)**. Using a maximum time limit of 1 ½ hours can end games played at invitational tournaments. The game can be called if there is five minutes or less before the maximum time limit or officials should not start a new inning after one hour and twenty minutes of play, except if a tie exists where NFHS Softball Rules for tiebreaking would be followed.
   b) Sub-varsity games may end after three (3) innings if a team is leading by (15) runs. (With mutual agreement of coaches)

3. (4-2-6) Tie Breaker – **Invitational tournaments** which use a tie breaking procedure shall follow the NFHS rules – beginning in the top of the eighth or at the time limit the last batter from the previous inning will be placed on second base at the beginning of each half inning with the game then proceeding in a normal manner until a winner is decided.

III. Review how your group will recommend (rank) umpires to the MHSA office for the state tournaments. (AA – Kalispell, A – Anaconda, B/C – Anaconda). Review the selection process for state tournament hiring, which is found on page 302 of the MOA Handbook.

IV. Are there any specific problems in your area schools which should be addressed i.e. field concerns – especially safe playing surfaces and proper field markings, checks given late, security, game times, poor sportsmanship, etc.

V. What issues does your group believe are important universal issues that need to be addressed by all officials’ pools throughout the state? (Including rule or mechanics changes, MOA policy changes, etc.) Please submit to the MHSA/MOA office any issues or any particular areas of concern that you would like included in clinics or study clubs.
VI. Discuss your methods of evaluating fellow MOA members. Are the methods working properly and positively? Should you start a method if you are not evaluating at the present time? Do these methods work for “upgrading”?

VII. How many prospective officials did you have in your pool this year? Discuss and evaluate your methods of recruitment and retention.

VIII. You have an obligation to read your MOA Handbook. All officials should be aware of the governing body’s rules and regulations. Any changes you would like to see should be directed to your regional director for the council’s meeting in June.

IX. In preparing for umpiring high school softball next year, review Section 1 of the 2010-2011 NFHS Softball Umpires Manual – Prerequisites For Good Umpiring – including:

The following three factors which are essential to the success of any umpire –

1) Judgment
2) Mechanics and Technique
3) Knowledge of the Rules

Other Prerequisites –

1) Physical Conditioning
2) Make Decisions Positively and Promptly
3) Umpire Crew Cohesiveness
4) Complete Knowledge of the Rules
5) Proper Mechanics
6) Tune Out Spectators
7) Sell the Call Without “Showboating”
8) Keep the Game Moving
9) Keep a Dignified Attitude’
10) Make Decisions Based on Fact

And, finally review the following information from the 2012 Softball Rules Book:

- Official NFHS Signals – page 86
- Improper Conduct Penalty Chart – page 85
- Dead Ball Tables – pages 43-44

And from the 2012 and 2013 – Softball Umpires Manual

- Helpful Hints for Umpires – Do’s and Don’ts –pages 15-16

Completed outline must be signed by all present and sent to the regional director by May 15, 2012.
Officials, coaches and administrators are being asked to make all efforts to ensure the safety of athletes who participate in MHSA activities. In regard to players experiencing possible concussions or other serious injuries during MHSA contests or practices, the following procedures will be immediately implemented:

**Officials’ Responsibilities:**

- Officials are asked to use their best judgment in observing the signs, symptoms and behaviors of a concussion and other possible serious injuries. If there is a player that exhibits signs and symptoms of an injury (listed below from the NFHS Rule Book), officials will make coaches aware of the injured player and call an injury time out.
- The official should notify the coach by making the following statement:
  - “Coach, you need to take a look at this player; he/she is exhibiting signs and symptoms of an injury.”
  - Emphasize the notification statement to coaches – “Coach, you need to take a look this player he/she is exhibiting signs and symptoms of an injury.”
- Once the official notifies the coach, it is now the coach’s responsibility.
- The official does not need written permission for an athlete to return to play nor does the official need to verify the credentials of the appropriate health-care professional.
- Ultimately, the decision to return an athlete to competition rests with the coach, after the affected player is evaluated by an appropriate health-care professional (MD, DO, NP or PAC).

**Remember, when in doubt, sit them out!**

**Coaches’ Responsibilities:**

- After the official has notified the coach of the injury and has sent the athlete off of the field/court, or if a coach witnesses an incident in practice, the coach must then make the initial determination of the injury. For instance, if the coach knows that a player is diabetic, and may be experiencing a diabetic episode, the coach should have the student treated appropriately and then return the player to play or practice.
- If the coach suspects the athlete is exhibiting the signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion (listed below from the NFHS Rule Book), then the coach must have the player evaluated by an appropriate health-care professional. (MD, DO, NP or PAC)
- If an appropriate health-care professional on the sideline determines that the athlete HAS NOT suffered a concussion, the athlete may return to play.
- If an appropriate health-care professional is not available to evaluate the athlete, the athlete SHOULD NOT be allowed by the coach to return to play.
• In game situations, the official does not need written permission for an athlete to return to play nor does the official need to verify the credentials of the appropriate health-care professional.
• Ultimately, the decision to return an athlete to competition or practice rests with the coach, after the affected player is evaluated by an appropriate health care professional (MD, DO, NP or PAC).

Remember, when in doubt, sit them out!

Suggested Guidelines for Management of Concussion (NFHS Rule Book)
A concussion is a traumatic brain injury that interferes with normal brain function. An athlete does not have to lose consciousness (be “knocked out”) to have suffered a concussion.

Discuss “Signs, Symptoms and Behaviors” consistent with identifying an injured athlete.
• Common Symptoms of Concussion Include:
  • Headache, Fogginess, Difficulty concentrating, Easily confused, Slowed thought processes, Difficulty with memory, Nausea, Lack of energy, tiredness, Dizziness, poor balance, Blurred vision, Sensitive to light and sounds, Mood changes- irritable, anxious, or tearful

Suggested Concussion Management:
1. No athlete should return to play (RTP) or practice on the same day of a concussion.
2. Any athlete suspected of having a concussion should be evaluated by an appropriate health-care professional that day.
3. Any athlete with a concussion should be medically cleared by an appropriate healthcare professional prior to resuming participation in any practice or competition.
4. After medical clearance, RTP should follow a step-wise protocol with provisions for delayed RTP based upon return of any signs or symptoms.

For further details please see the “NFHS Suggested Guidelines for Management of Concussion” at www.nfhs.org.

Administrators’ Responsibilities:
• Administrators must require all coaches to review and implement this procedure.
• Administrators should have regular reviews with their coaching staffs concerning these procedures.
• Administrators should require coaches to report all incidents to the administration immediately following the practice or contest. All incidents should be documented.
• Administrators must understand the responsibilities that coaches have in the decision to return athletes to play. MHSA Rules and Regulations item (4) states: A participant in any MHSA sanctioned sport who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion or balance problems) or other serious injury shall be immediately removed from the game, evaluated by the coaching staff in regard to the nature of the injury, and if it is determined to be a possible concussion or other serious injury, the player shall not return to play until cleared by an appropriate health-care professional (MD, DO, PAC or NP).
• Ultimately, the decision to return an athlete to competition rests with the coach, after the affected player is evaluated by an appropriate health care professional (MD, DO, NP or PAC).

Remember, when in doubt, sit them out!

Concussion Resource Information
Various information and resources are available on the MHSA website. Visit www.mhsa.org and proceed to the Sports Medicine page from the link on the home page.
DP/FLEX RULE INFORMATION

DP/FLEX Rule - Designated Player (DP) / FLEX Rule – with this rule taking effect seven years ago there still is some confusion with the rule that led to misapplication of the rule. It is imperative that all umpires have an understanding of this rule to answer questions and enforce the rule properly. Please Review the DP/FLEX Rule on pages 32-33 of the 2012 Rules Book (3-3-6) and please Review all the Case Book Plays dealing with the Designated Player (DP)/FLEX rule.

Please take time to review the information on the MHSA website in regard to the DP/FLEX rule. There are actual examples illustrated by the use of a line up card including the new examples used this year in the online clinic. The site is www.mhsa.org, then click on softball on the left and then on DP/FLEX Rule at the bottom of the softball page under links and clinics. Also information is available on the National Federation website nfhs.org under the softball tab.

Pitching Information

Two years ago and again this year Pitching was and is a NFHS Point of Emphasis and has been a point of emphasis for the MHSA/MOA for many years – Please review and discuss this information that has been sent to each coach and included in the study clubs for the past few years:

The Leap, The Crow Hop and The Creep (this information was provided in the last seven study clubs but is well worth reviewing again especially as pitching continues to be a national point of emphasis).

The leap is an illegal act that results in the pitcher becoming airborne on the initial push-off from the pitcher’s plate. When using the leap, the pitcher pushes up and away from the rubber, and both feet are simultaneously off the ground during the delivery. The rules mandate that the pitcher’s pivot foot must remain in contact with the rubber or must drag on the ground away from the rubber on the delivery motion. It’s legal if the pivot foot turns or slides as the pitcher pushes off the rubber, providing there is no loss of contact with the rubber. The pitcher may also legally slide the pivot foot across the pitcher’s plate. If contact with the rubber is maintained, that sliding is not considered a step and is allowed.

The crow hop is, and for many years has been, a blatant violation in fast pitch. With the crow hop, the pitcher steps, jumps, hops or slides the pivot foot off the front of the rubber while maintaining body weight on the pivot foot. The pitcher then replants the pivot foot in front of the rubber. That replant establishes a new impetus for the pitch in front of the rubber. The pitcher then pushes off illegally from in front of the rubber when delivering the pitch. A pitcher who raises the pivot foot off the rubber and then returns the foot to the rubber did not crow hop but is illegally pitching.

Many pitchers pitch with the stride foot in front of the body but kick up some dirt as the pivot foot stabs the ground or turns as the ball is released. That stabbing action is usually an ending segment of a legal delivery or recovery step, not a crow hop. The key is whether the body weight is moving forward (legal) or on the pivot foot (illegal) when the pivot foot stabs the ground. A real crow hop affords a tremendous advantage for the pitcher.

The “CREEP” – With leaping outlawed, many pitchers concentrate intently on keeping their pivot foot on the ground to comply with the “drag” rule so they aren’t called for leaping. However that attentiveness to keeping the pivot foot on the ground resurrected an old-time style of pitching called the “creep”. With the creep, the pitcher slides the pivot foot off the front of the rubber to comply with the drag rule but keeps the body weight on the rear foot. By creeping forward off the rubber with the pivot foot and keeping the body weight back, the pitcher can push off anew with a forward motion not related to the original pitching motion. This method is difficult for umpires to recognize. That pitch is also known as the “crow drag” or the “slide.” The creep can result from a pitcher’s honest attempt to keep the pivot foot on the ground, or it can be an intentional act to disguise that form of the crow hop. Either way, the pitch is illegal.
### Plate Mechanics Information

Please review the following information from Referee Magazine - “Working the Plate”

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Mechanics – Please discuss the following information on “plate work” for fast-pitch softball. Give demonstrations on these techniques for review and for new officials.</th>
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#### a) Choosing a stance

All plate umpires must master the box stance. After perfecting the box, some umpires elect to use the scissors or one-knee method of umpiring.

**Box stance** – (right handed batter) – With the box, your feet are wider than shoulder width apart. Place your right foot flat on the ground six inches to one foot behind the catcher’s midpoint. The foot is pointed toward the second baseman’s normal position. The toe of the left foot is flat on the ground and pointed toward the pitcher. The lead foot is lined up with the heel of the catcher’s left foot. The toe of your right foot is lined up with heel of your lead foot. Flare your knees out so your knees are closely aligned with your ankles. Bend at the knees, not at the waist, and keep your buttocks above your knees. Your body weight will be about 80 percent forward. Keep your shoulders square to the pitcher. Position your elbows inside your upper body frame with your hands in loose, relaxed fists in front of your crotch. Avoid folding your arms behind your back.

**The scissors** – your legs are fully open like a pair of scissors. Position your feet one full stride apart. Your front foot, nearest the batter, is flat on the ground between the batter and the catcher and about six inches behind the catcher’s left foot. Your lead foot is bent at a 90-degree angle at the knee to support most of your body weight. Your rear foot is fully extended with knee straight. The ball of your rear foot is on the ground with your heel elevated. Your head is well forward, between the batter and the catcher.

**The one-knee** – this stance is similar to the scissors. However your rear knee is resting completely on the ground, your feet about one-half stride apart and your back straight. For smaller batters, it may be necessary to lean forward to keep your eyes at the top of the strike zone.

**Setting up** – Work in the slot between the batter and the catcher. Your head position is critical. Your head must be at least one full head above the catcher’s head, at least one full head to the side of the catcher’s head and at least one full head behind the catcher’s head. Your eyes must be level and your head outside the perimeter of the strike zone as you look down and through the zone. Line up your right ear with the black border of the inside corner.

**Staying down** – Avoid tunnel vision with your eyes fixed ahead. Track the pitch with your eyes. Follow the pitch all the way to the batter’s bat or the catcher’s glove. On a ball not batted, stay down until after the catcher receives the ball. Train yourself not to bail out, duck or flinch behind the plate.