

Dear Coaches and Umpires,

July 8, 2009

**We lost an outstanding individual/coach, Ed Thomas, since we all last communicated and I'd like to send our condolences on behalf of all our baseball family (coaches, players and umpires), to the Thomas family and friends for this tragic loss. He truly was a man of faith and character throughout! I hope through the loss of Coach Thomas he has inspired many of us to look back on ourselves and truly understand why we really are here and what we need to do while on this earth. He touched so many people, young and old, in so many positive ways. That is the challenge I offer each of you today, including myself. Coach Thomas never met a person he couldn't say something positive about.**

**1) Coaches and Umpires:** I would like to remind both coaches and umpires to keep your composure and remember who is observing your adult behavior. Umpires, do your best to keep a coach or player in the game and apply good game management skills. If we work together, it will be a more enjoyable game for everyone involved.

**2) Schools who desire to play music at baseball games, must play appropriate music approved by the administrator, and if music is played it needs to be before and after the game (between games) and between innings only. Music must cease** when the last warm-up pitch is made to start the game and between innings. This rule change was proposed by the Baseball Coaches Advisory Committee and passed by the HSAA Board of Control starting with the 2009 baseball season.

**3) Suggested Double First base Rules (Rule Book Page 67):** Some coaches were interpreting you could use the orange base to retire a batter runner regardless if it involved a dropped third strike or not.

Number 1, under suggested double first base rules: Runner should use colored base on initial play at first base, unless the fielder is drawn to the side of the colored base due to a dropped third strike/touched the ground even though cleanly caught by the catcher, in which the batter runner would have the opportunity, via rule, to go to the white base and the fielder to the orange base. The rules states that a batter runner can advance to first base following a dropped/uncaught third strike if first base is not occupied at the time of the pitch (exception; if two are out the batter/runner must be tagged out or thrown out, regardless if first base was occupied or not). Understanding with two outs and the bases loaded, the catcher could step on home plate for a force out, ending the inning.

**Play:** Ground ball hit to the short-stop, he fields the ball and makes a strong throw to first, but the throw is high and forces the first baseman to jump up and back to catch the errant throw. The first baseman must contact the white base before the batter runner does, in order to retire the batter runner. If we allowed the defensive team to retire the batter runner by touching the orange base we have provided the defensive team an advantage due to an errant throw by his teammate.

**4) Umpires and Coaches: Pitching from the Set Position 6-1-3:** When a pitcher is pitching from the set position, the pitcher shall have the ball in either his glove hand or his pitching hand, and **his pitching hand shall be down at his side or behind his back.** This pitching rule has been discussed at rules meetings in past years (NFHS Rule) and for some reason we are seeing the gorilla stance (swinging of the pitching arm in front of the body while in the set position) starting to feed back into the game. Coaches it is your responsibility to teach this stance correctly and umpires need to clean this up if it taking place in games you are working.

A little boy was overheard talking to himself as he strutted through the backyard, wearing his baseball cap and toting a ball and bat: "I'm the greatest hitter in the world," he announced. Then, he tossed the ball into the air, swung at it, and missed. "Strike one!" he yelled. Undaunted, he picked up the ball and said again: "I'm the greatest hitter in the world!" He tossed the ball into the air. When it came down he swung again and missed. "Strike two!" he cried. The boy then paused a moment to examine his bat and ball carefully. He spit on his hands and rubbed them together. He straightened his cap and said once more: "I'm the greatest hitter in the world!" Again he tossed the ball up in the air and swung at it. He missed. "Strike three!" "Wow!" he exclaimed: "I'm the greatest pitcher in the world."

**5) Tournament play will be here before we know it and conference championships may be decided in the upcoming games, so make sure all of us are prepared and ready to give it our best shot.**

**6) Umpires:** Make sure you are doing your varsity baseball **sportsmanship ratings** on-line. The deadline is August 3, 2009, to have your ratings posted in order to be tournament eligible for the 2010 baseball tournament series. You must also attend an Iowa baseball rules meeting, take on-line rules meeting or attend an IHSAA state sponsored baseball umpire clinic/rules meeting. Next spring, you must do your on-line request form (schedule) in a timely manner.

On behalf of the Iowa High School Athletic Association and myself, I've enjoyed visiting with you via email and best of luck to everyone.

Sincerely,

Roger Barr