



## 2013 POINTS OF EMPHASIS

The NFHS Softball Rules Committee and the NFHS Board of Directors believes there are areas of the game of interscholastic softball 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 2013 high school softball season, attention is being called to: DP/Flex Education, Bench Personnel Conduct (home run celebration), and Good Sporting Behavior. When a topic is included in the Points of Emphasis, these topics are important enough to reinforce throughout the academic year because they are not being given the proper attention.

### DP/FLEX EDUCATION

It is believed that many coaches and umpires still may not completely understand the DP/FLEX rule (3-3-6) since it was passed in 2004. The committee felt a “refresher” would be appropriate to more fully understand and utilize all the options available with the rule. The DP/FLEX rule was originally adopted because it provides more participation opportunities for student-athletes and more flexibility to coaches. There are sample line-up cards reflecting both type of line-ups as a reference.

- A. For Coaches – Basic Rules to Remember. Keep these basic rules in mind:
  1. Decide the 10 players you want to be designated as starters: 1) list the nine players you want to have in the batting order on lines 1 through 9; 2) list the name of the remaining player (FLEX) on the tenth line.
  2. Fill in the defensive positions and list the player not initially playing defense as the DP.
  3. When making lineup changes:
    - a. The DP cannot play defense only and the FLEX cannot play offense only.

- b. When the DP spot in the batting order comes up, either the DP, FLEX, or their legal substitutes must bat or run the bases. It is the only offensive spot the DP or FLEX player may hold.
  - c. The DP can replace anyone on defense any time, any number of times while the FLEX player may replace the DP any time, any number of times.
  - d. When any of the first nine players listed on the card leaves the batting order, she has left the game and when the FLEX player leaves the game on defense, she has left the game.
- B. For Coaches – Basic Utilization Strategies. The following are two basic strategies a coach might utilize to match the skills of the DP and FLEX players to complement one another. Further examples can be found on the NFHS Web site ([www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org)).
1. *Objective:* to utilize a fast runner who is a weak hitter (FLEX) to run for the solid hitting DP.
    - a. Matchup: assuming your pitcher can hit for herself, pair up an solid hitter (DP) with a player of exceptional speed but who is a weak hitter (FLEX).
    - b. Typical sequence: DP hits safely; FLEX enters to run for her; DP reenters and hits safely; FLEX enters to run for her; sub #1 hits for DP (since the DP already used her one reentry), FLEX enters to run for sub #1; sub #1 reenters and hits safely; FLEX enters to run for sub #1; sub #2 hits safely; FLEX enters to run for her; and so on.
  2. *Objective:* list a power hitter as the FLEX player when you have a platoon of players who will be the DP's.
    - a. Matchup: assuming your pitcher can hit for herself, pair up an average player (DP) with a good hitting, but slow runner (FLEX) who also plays defense. Also used for a good hitting pitcher (FLEX) who you do not want running the bases unnecessarily.
    - b. Typical sequence: as the spot in the batting order comes up, enter the FLEX who hits safely; reenter the DP to run; enter the FLEX who hits safely; sub #1 enters to run (since the DP already used her one reentry); enter the FLEX who hits safely; sub #1 reenters to run; FLEX hits safely; sub #2 enters to run; and so on.
- C. For Umpires. The following are helpful hints in properly maintaining your lineup card (see sample line-up cards):
1. A team may use the DP/FLEX option provided it is made know at the pregame conference.
  2. The DP's name is indicated on the lineup as one of the nine hitters in the batting order.

3. The name of the player for whom the DP is batting (FLEX) is placed in the 10<sup>th</sup> position in the lineup.
4. The DP may be substituted for at any time by a legal substitute or the FLEX may play offense for the DP. In either case, the DP has left the game.
5. The DP may play defense at any position.
6. The FLEX may be substituted for at any time by a legal substitute or the DP may play defense for the FLEX. In either case, the FLEX has left the game.
7. Placing the FLEX into one of the first nine positions for someone other than the DP's position is considered an illegal substitution.
8. A team may go from 10 to nine players and back to 10 any number of times during the game; the game may also end with 10 or nine players.
9. The DP and FLEX *may never* be on offense at the same time; however, they *may* play defense at the same time.

#### BENCH PERSONNEL CONDUCT (HOME RUN CELEBRATION)

Home runs are an exciting part of the game. They are an infrequent but exhilarating accomplishment for a young person. The thrill of helping your team score by that method should be shared by the team. By rule, team personnel are not allowed outside of the dugout/bench or designated warm-up area during live ball action. However, during the dead ball period of a home run it is appropriate for team personnel to congratulate a team member when she accomplishes such a feat. It is also a teachable moment to encourage camaraderie and greater participation of teammates.

#### GOOD SPORTING BEHAVIOR

Umpires and coaches need to work together. Each contest is another opportunity for coaches and umpires to teach not only softball, but also model appropriate behavior as well. The positive values that are learned will serve the players long after their softball experience has concluded. Game situations typically provide a coach the opportunity to identify a teachable moment to reinforce good sporting behavior.