

**Play #1** To properly address this play situation, the umpire must look at the entire situation. In Maryland, as in most other places in which high school softball is played under National Federation Rules, the umpire must note on his or her lineup card any changes that occur during the game. In this particular play, the coach notified the plate umpire that he was putting #17 in as a courtesy runner as a courtesy runner for the catcher in the second inning. The umpire should have noted this on his or her lineup card. When the coach then tried to use #17 for a courtesy runner for the pitcher in the fifth inning, the plate umpire should have prevented this from happening and should have informed the coach that #17 could enter the game as a legal substitute but she could not enter the game as a courtesy runner for the pitcher. Several respondents stated that this was an illegal substitution and while they are technically correct, but they didn't look at the entire picture. NF Rule 10-2-3m states under the plate umpire duties that the plate umpire should "rectify any situation in which an umpire's decision that was reversed has placed either team in jeopardy." By incorrectly accepting the coach's insertion of #17 as a courtesy runner for the pitcher and then having to correct it later leaves the only alternative to be to convert #17's status to an unreported substitute and resume play. Several respondents wanted to call #17 out and eject her as an illegal substitute failed to consider that the plate umpire put the player and team in jeopardy in the first place.

**Play #2** This is not a legal offensive conference. If the umpires can prevent the conference from taking place and send the runners back to first and second bases before the conference takes place, that would probably be the best solution. However, if the conference actually takes place, the plate umpire should inform the head coach that he or she has used their one offensive conference for that inning. If the coach had already used the team's allotted offensive conference for that inning, warn the coach that any further unauthorized conference will be dealt with more seriously. That could include the coach being confined to the dugout for the remainder of the game for unsporting behavior.

**Play #3** This play situation contained a lot of extraneous information which we, as umpires, must filter through to get to the basics of the play. Regardless of how many fielders touched the thrown ball attempting to gain control, it remains a thrown ball and the proper rule application leaves the batter-runner at third base and the lead runner has scored.

**Play #4** NF Rule 8-2-7 clearly defines this as batter-runner interference with a dropped third strike. I did go to NF headquarters, and they confirmed this ruling.

**Play #5** When B3 received a pitch, all previous action, no matter how convoluted, became legal. In this situation, B6 was the last legal batter. B7 will come to bat and she will inherit the 2-2 count. Explaining this ruling to the coach and/or score keeper may be difficult.

**Play #6** When B6 received a pitch, all previous action, no matter how convoluted, became legal. In this situation, B3 was the last legal batter and remains as a baserunner on first base. B4 would normally be the next batter but B4 is a baserunner on second base. She is skipped and remains on second base as a baserunner. B5 comes to bat and inherits the 2-2 count from B6, and now B5 is in the unique position to make back-to-back outs in the same inning. From a spectator's point of view, this looks weird as all get out, but that's softball!