

All,

As I have said before, consistency is important and I'd like all our MPSSAA umpires to officiate in the same basic ways. The document attached is a simple beginning for all of us; I don't think any local organization would disagree with the topics. But honestly, illegal pitching may cause some questions. As the presentation says, most softball organizations across the country have been asking us to enforce the illegal pitch rules for years, with compliance being spotty at best. It is unfair for players and coaches to have a variety of different enforcements from game to game. A standard way of following these rules should begin locally and continue at the state semi-final and final levels. We need to get past the point where individual umpires are choosing or not choosing to adhere to certain procedures. Crews that move on to the state tournament level will be expected to know and enforce the rules.

Without the help of all local associations the goal of consistent enforcement will be much more difficult. My plan is to have more information, with accompanying video, placed on the MPSSAA softball website in the near future. It will expand and hopefully clarify what we are looking for. Thanks for all the hard work it takes to be a good umpire, and communicate with me if I can clarify anything.

Rick

# CONSISTENCY

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- All MPSSAA softball officials benefit from each individual member following the same guidelines.
- The high school softball field is not a place for umpires to decide which rules and procedures they do or don't want to enforce.
- Umpires definitely do not need to be robots. But we also can't simply say "well, that's just the way I want to do it".

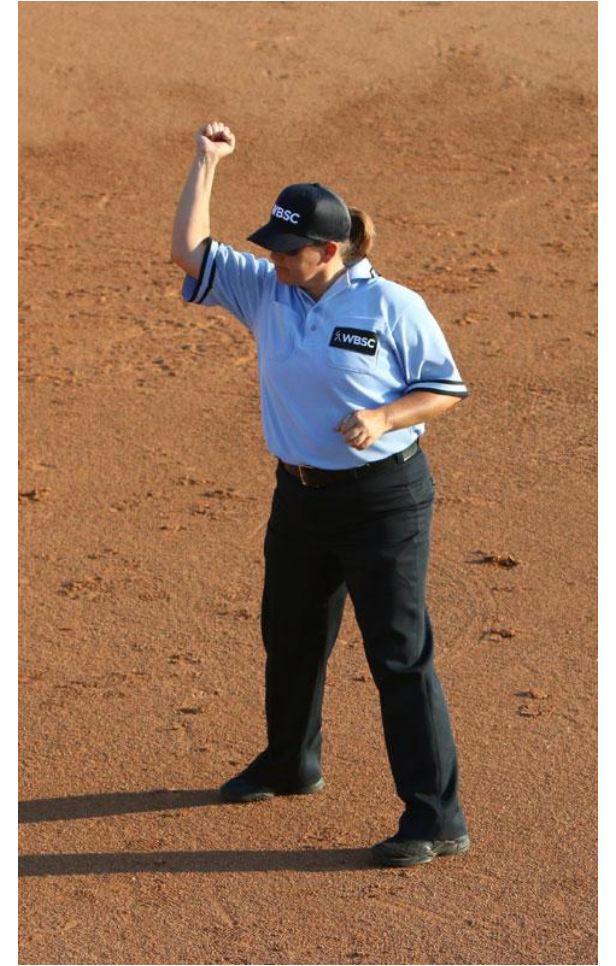
# Strive to be athletic

- Please notice how I didn't say you had to necessarily **be** athletic. But we cannot just stand in one place, move very slowly to a position, give weak and sloppy signals, etc. and expect to be viewed as a good official.
- We are on the field with young women athletes. We need to attempt to fit in and look the part.

# Get ourselves ready for the season

- Do what needs to be done to be physically ready for the season to begin. Stretch, work out, walk, run, etc.
- If we simply walk out on the field for our first game of the season without being physically prepared, the game will suffer.

We all want to have clear, strong, appropriate signals. Good motion to your positions.



# Be professional

- We are receiving pay for our services. So, we are indeed a professional.
- Replace any old shirts, pants, shoes, etc. Old uniforms reflect poorly on all umpires in any association. Everyone notices.
- Wear the same uniform that the other members of your association wear. Wearing the same uniform helps everyone look like members of a unified group.



# Be professional (cont.)

- Whether behind the plate or in the field, do not be overly conversational with coaches, players or fans. Be pleasant, respond to questions with short, clear words, but do not initiate conversations. We have a job to do.
- We need to look like we want to be there. Smile. Don't scowl. No matter what has happened in our day, the players and coaches need an umpire that looks like they want to be on the softball field.

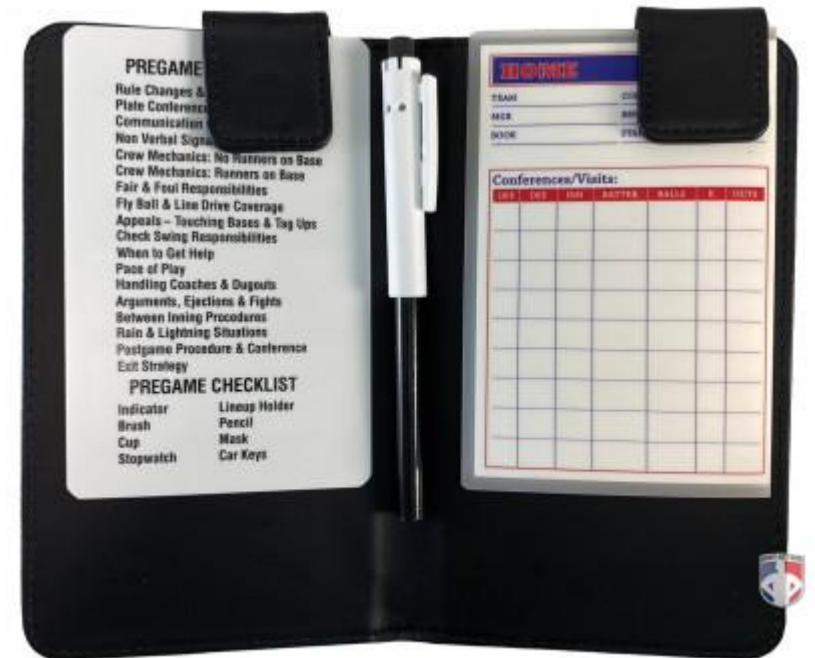
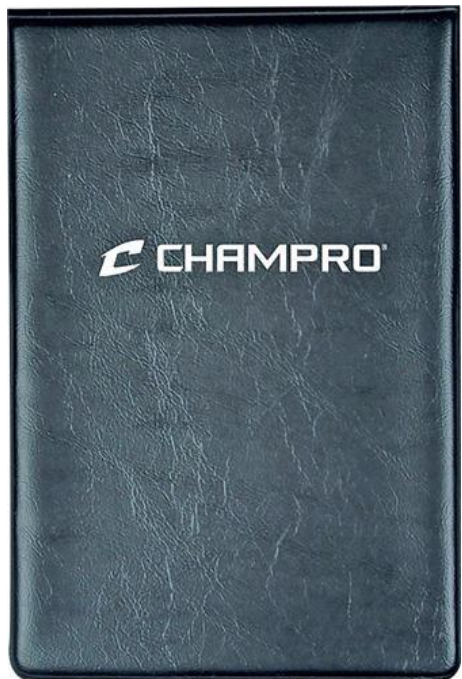
Enthusiastic,  
matching and  
professional. There  
is no reason not to  
look like this  
everyday.



# Follow proper NFHS mechanics

- We are not working a recreational game (if you do work rec ball, thank you. It's extremely valuable.)
- We are not working an NCAA game (if you do work NCAA ball, then you've worked hard to get to that position and you should feel good about it.)
- We are working a high school softball game governed by the NFHS . Please use those rules and mechanics.
- Most games use two umpires. Even in a one umpire game, understand what you are expected to do in all situations. Get to the spot you are supposed to be at. Follow your local association's guidance.

# Use your line up card each and every time it is needed.



Every time there is **any** type of lineup change given to you, record it correctly. Never just say "OK coach" without taking out the lineup and making sure that it is legal.



- Do not accept a lineup change or the use of a courtesy runner unless it is legal. **Check every time.**
- Say something like “Sorry coach, you can’t do that” if you are given an improper change.
- Not 100% sure?  
Consult with your partner.



# Understand illegal pitches. Call them.

- Over the last 5-6 years, all organizations (NFHS, NCAA, USSSA, USA, etc.) have pushed for better enforcement of the illegal pitch rules.
- Why should we simply ignore their instructions?

- It's not fair to coaches and players that there is inconsistency from game to game, association to association.
- It's definitely not fair for pitchers to go an entire season having obvious illegal pitches simply ignored, and then have the rule enforced when they move on through the playoffs.
- "She's not gaining an advantage", "she's not the regular pitcher", or "she's not very good anyway" are not part of any rulebook, point of emphasis or interpretation.
- JV or Varsity. Good teams. Not so good teams. Do we ignore other rules (interference, obstruction, batting out of order, etc.) because the team is at a lower level?



- Many of our state softball officials are very conscientious when it comes to understanding and enforcing illegal pitch violations.
- If all of us are consistent in enforcing the rule, then it would not be a major issue. Your local organization can give you instruction and support.
- A video/PowerPoint explaining in more detail about the illegal pitch will be on the MPSSAA Softball webpage in the near future. Look at it. Understand it. Ask me or your local association for further explanations if needed.

- We are all in this together. Fastpitch softball is a great game, so let's strive to be consistent with the most basic NFHS rules, procedures and mechanics. Contact me anytime. I'm always glad to talk softball with you.
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