

For Umpire Use Only

INFORMATION FOR HIGH SCHOOL GAMES

General Umpiring

Umpire Uniforms: Heather gray slacks are part of your uniform, but not charcoal gray, twill or khaki slacks (E.g. Dockers). Some tournament organizations are now using charcoal gray but that is not yet sanctioned in the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS). Dockers or their equivalent are unacceptable. Umpires found out of uniform are subject to a fine of half their game fee. On game day, your pants should be cleaned and pressed with a crease. Shoes are cleaned and shined.

Shirts will have the Cascade Officials Association (CASO) logo, are to be clean, and worn completely tucked in your pants just like the players. Hats worn on the field will have the CASO logo, both when working the plate, if you are not using a hockey goalie mask, or the bases. The cap is worn with the bill facing forward. Do not wear your cap backward.

When on the field, do not drop your pants to tuck in the shirt, finish dressing, or possibly correct a “wardrobe malfunction.” Please, discreetly handle these in the parking lot.

The plate umpire wears a single ball bag on the hip, preferably the right hip. Ball bags should be worn so they do not bounce off your buttocks or your groin. Although not prohibited, wearing two ball bags is not encouraged. Base umpires do not wear ball bags!

Umpire Assignments and Conduct: Check for revised assignments at least once a day. If a game is cancelled after 12:00 pm on game day, you will be notified personally. You should confirm other cancellations via Arbiter.

If you umpire a game by yourself or your partner arrives at the field after the scheduled start time for the game, the assigner must be notified. If the assigner learns of this after the fact, both crew members will be fined up to one half their game fee.

Avoid physical contact with players. If a handshake is appropriate, such as during introductions, that is okay. The plate umpire should not physically contact the catcher at any time.

Do not initiate or participate in conversations with coaches, school administrators, parents, etc. about the internal workings of CASO. Your schedule will be terminated, and you will be suspended indefinitely.

At least one member of every crew must always have a cell phone with them. If you perceive a threat to your or your partner’s personal safety, stop the game, call 911, and inform the coaches the game will not resume until you are completely satisfied that the situation has been resolved.

Field Mechanics: The plate umpire calls balls and strikes from a squatting position achieved by bending the knees. When the pitch is released, the plate umpire’s eyes should be at the top of the strike zone and the nose on the inside edge of the plate.

With no runners on base, the base umpire does not start inside the diamond. Please follow the established two-umpire mechanics.

Between half innings, the base umpire should clean the pitching plate, and as needed, the bases. While waiting for the game to resume, the base umpire is positioned near the edge of the outfield grass about 20 feet inside the foul line facing home plate. The appropriate posture is military parade rest.

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The plate umpire, between innings, is positioned on the first base or third base line extended into foul territory about 10 feet from home plate facing the offensive team dugout. Do not wear the mask, hold it your arm and stand at parade rest.

Coach Request to Discuss a Call: When a coach wants to discuss a call made on the field, time must be requested and be granted before the coach can approach any umpire. The coach should discuss the judgment decision only with the umpire who made the call. The coach cannot talk to the other umpire regarding a judgment decision.

The umpire who made the call may ask the other umpire for input. As a matter of good technique, if you ask your partner for input, listen to your partner. After such a discussion, only the umpire who made the original call may change the call. No umpire has the authority to reverse a partner's judgment call. If it is alleged that a rule was misapplied, the plate umpire (crew chief) makes the final decision.

If you are not involved in the discussion, you should ensure that only the head coach approaches your partner. Do not be unengaged and allow multiple coaches to approach your partner during a request to discuss a call.

Parking: A good practice is to communicate with your partner prior to game day to coordinate where you will park. For some schools, e.g. Northwood, you can park at the school or on the street. Know where you and your partner will park before game day so you can access the field together. You should park in the student lot near the athletic field entrance for Good Counsel games.

When parking at Richard Montgomery, park in the small lot next to the school. Do not park in the lot next to the baseball field. Baseball foul balls can hit cars in that parking lot.

At Damascus, park in the front lot of the school. This is a longer walk to the field. If you park down the access road on the side of the school, but are not in a marked space, you could get a ticket for parking along the roadway.

Illegal Pitches: Not calling illegal pitches creates a problem for umpires who do. The classic is, "you're the first one to call that all season" or "the last guy didn't call any illegal pitches." By consistently calling them we can make sure coaches know they will be called.

The NFHS Maryland State Rules Interpreter issued guidance on February 27, 2025. The guidance covered the need for consistency across the state and that illegal pitches should be called.

Based on the guidance issued on consistency and the need to call illegal pitches, CASO is changing its policy for JV games. Illegal pitches should be called every time they occur. If at some point, the pitcher has made corrections that are better aligning with a legal pitch, the umpire may find that is sufficient for the game. A change must be evident that shows a correction to the illegal pitch.

More details can be found in CASO Rules Interpretation 2025-05, "Illegal Pitches," You can find it on [the Information and Links page of our website](#)

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Field, Attire, and Equipment

Jewelry: Jewelry is now permitted unless the umpire determines it is a distraction or increases the risk to players. The former State Rule's Interpreter provided guidance that umpires should rarely find jewelry distracting or increasing a risk. "Let them play."

Temporary Bases: Two spikes must be used with floating bases. Hollywood bases may be used. Double first base is allowed (encouraged) but not required.

Softballs: The softball for all regular season county games should have the specifications listed in Rule 1, Section 3, Article 3 and be marked with the NFHS authenticating mark. For playoffs, regional and state tournaments, the Maryland Public Secondary School Athletic Association, Girls' Softball Committee requires the Dudley, **SB121 Optic Yellow ball with red stitching**.

Bats: In addition to the technical specifications found in NFHS Rule 1-5-1,2, a legal bat must be labeled with the permanent ASA approved certification, either 2000 or 2004, or the new USA certification. Old bats are not "grandfathered." Refer to the USA website for additional information. Do not permit bats without the proper certification mark or on the unapproved bat list to be used in games.

Slow-pitch and baseball bats: Slow-pitch bats have an ASA and USA symbol, but they are not the one authorized in the rule book. Often parents playing slow pitch will give their old bat to their daughters, especially on JV teams.

There are now six different Ghost bat models. Not all have the accepted ASA or USA symbols. If a player steps in the box with an illegal Ghost bat, make sure to remove it from the game.

Helmets: Each batter, base runner, and student base coach must wear a NOCSAE-approved helmet with a classic, caged face protector, whenever they are on the playing field and there is a live ball. The catcher must wear head protection and a protective mask with throat protector. The catcher's helmet and mask combination shall be NOCSAE certified, and the catcher's helmet shall have ear flaps.

Only students on the teams playing can be coach bases. For example, a varsity player who wants to be a base coach in a JV game is not permitted. That player is not registered with Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) for that team. Therefore, she is not covered by insurance. You could be personally liable if she is injured.

Game Management

MCPS Varsity and JV Games

Arrival Time: For MCPS games, be at the school no later than 30 minutes before game time. Traffic in the metropolitan area can impact your travel time so please account for that.

Both umpires should go to the field as a team and be on the field 15 minutes before game time. The pregame conference starts 5 minutes before game time.

Weather Delay: For each lightning strike or thunderclap, the teams must abandon the field for 30 minutes. The 30-minute interval starts anew with each lightning strike or thunderclap. If

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there are less than 30 minutes in a JV game, see “JV Games,” when a lightning strike or thunderclap occurs, the game is complete.

The MCPS policy is in its handbook on game delays due to weather. If a game is delayed one and one-half hours (cumulative time) due to inclement weather, the contest shall be ended. Coaches can end the game earlier if mutually agreed to do so. The MCPS handbook and a more detailed discussion can be found on the [Information and Links page](#) of the [CASO website](#), under the “MCPS Rules and Other Information” section.

At Good Counsel, there is a lightning alarm. That alarm will sound when lightning is within 10 miles of the complex. Once the alarm sounds, the game cannot resume until the alarm sounds all clear.

Scrimmages: All MCPS scrimmages, varsity and JV, have a two-hour, no new inning time limit. The clock starts at the scheduled game time. If the game ends in seven innings and there is time left on the clock, let the teams do special situations if they want. Allow coaches to teach during scrimmages. Scrimmages are a learning environment.

JV Games: Junior varsity teams will bat a maximum of nine batters in each half inning. After the completion of play following the ninth batter, that half inning ends. When the team comes to bat in the half inning following the inning in which the ninth-batter rule was enforced, the inning ***may (coach’s choice)*** begin with any base runners (or their substitutes) who were left on base at the end of the preceding inning returning to their base. Do not allow players to return to their base until warmups are completed.

This rule does not apply in the 7th or any extra inning when three outs must be made. If the half inning ended with three outs, runners do not return to their bases.

In JV games, no new inning will start two hours after the end of the pre-game meeting at home plate or when time starts, whichever is sooner. **For MCPS games, there is no drop dead at two hours.**

The pre-game meeting will begin five minutes before the scheduled start time for the game. If the umpires are on time but one team is late or teams are not ready to start the game at the scheduled time, the two-hour time limit begins at game time. In this situation, the pregame conference is conducted with the clock running.

This game clock continues through rain, lightning, and injury delays. The field is cleared for 30 minutes for each thunder or lightning strike. The 30-minute interval resets with each new strike.

Some umpires have been telling coaches JV games do not need lineup cards. This is incorrect. The plate umpire keeps the lineup cards for all high school games, both varsity and JV. Only when working youth games or high school scrimmages are lineup cards not needed.

Mercy Rule: The 10-run mercy rule will be used for all MCPS varsity and junior varsity games. If after completing five innings one team is ahead by 10 runs, the game will be considered complete. The losing team must complete the at bat in the inning before the game can end. If the home team is ahead by 10 runs after four- and one-half innings, the game ends.

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Tie Breaker: The National Federation Tie-Breaker Procedure will be used **for both junior varsity and varsity MCPS games**. When using the tie breaker, each half-inning begins by placing a runner on second base.

That runner is the player in the batting order who precedes the lead-off batter in that inning [last player to have completed a turn at bat]. It is not the last out of the inning. **The plate umpire should confirm with both books who the player in front of the lead-off batter is to avoid an illegal substitution.** Do not allow the player to take second base until all warmups are completed.

The game proceeds like this until the winner is determined. ***[Note: Enforcement of an “automatic out” as described in NF Rule 3-3-8b or 4-3-1g shall not create an out, either base runner or leadoff batter, when the tie breaker procedure is in use.]***

Ejection Notification: If you eject a player or a coach, the ejecting umpire must provide the details to Joe Holonich that day or evening. Please get the player's number, and if possible, her name. Please provide enough information so that a report of the incident can be filed with Montgomery County Public Schools that evening.

The umpire must also complete the Maryland Public Secondary School Athletic Association (MPSSAA) ejection form. [You can find it here](#). It is also available on the [Information and Links page](#) of [our website](#).

Do tell any coach or player how long a coach or player will be barred from coaching or playing softball during the season. Dr. Jeff Sullivan, Director, Systemwide Athletics, MCPS, will inform any players or coaches how long they are out.

MCPS wants a report on any behavior that is unsportsmanlike. If you restrict a player or coach to the bench, or have issues with any game participant, player, coach, fan, please inform Joe Holonich that evening. He will report it to his MCPS counterpart.

Sportsmanship Evaluation: **Plate umpires** on varsity, **only varsity and not JV**, regular and post season games must complete the MPSSAA sportsmanship questionnaire. [You can access the MPSSAA sportsmanship survey here](#). It is also available on the [Information and Links page](#) of [our website](#). The link is also available on the Report page of your Arbiter game.

You will be fined \$5 if you fail to complete the online sportsmanship evaluation within 7 days of the game.

Good Counsel Varsity and JV Games

Cleats: Metal cleats and toe plates are now allowed.

Arrival Time: For games at Good Counsel High School, you need to be at the school 45 minutes before game time. Traffic in the metropolitan area can impact your travel time so please account for that.

Both umpires should go to the field as a team and be on the field 15 minutes before game time. The pregame conference starts 5 minutes before game time.

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Scrimmages: All scrimmages, varsity, and JV, have a two-hour, no new inning time limit. The clock starts at the scheduled game time. If the game ends in seven innings and there is time left on the clock, let the teams do special situations if they want. Allow coaches to teach during scrimmages. Scrimmages are a learning environment.

Substitutions

Defensive substitutions are unlimited in Good Counsel games. In other words, a player can play in any defensive position on the field as many times as the team wants. If she does not bat, she is not considered a formal substitution. The only defensive substitutions that must be announced are the pitcher and catcher substitutions due to the courtesy runner rule.

Offensive substitutions follow the standard procedure, e.g. any player removed from the batting lineup has one reentry right and can only occupy the position she originally had in the lineup. If a defensive substitution bats, this is an unreported substitute and the appropriate penalty should be followed, team warning on first event and player and coach restricted to the bench on the second.

Game Procedures: Varsity games must have nine players to start a game. If the varsity lineup drops to eight players during the game, an out is taken in the vacant bating position.

JV Games: JV games may start with eight players on either or both teams. No out is taken if the JV lineup starts with or, at any time during the game, drops to only eight players.

A courtesy runner is allowed for the pitcher and catcher. The courtesy runner may be either a substitute or the last out, NOT the last completed at bat. The same player cannot run for the pitcher and catcher in the same inning but may run for either position in different innings.

After five runs are scored in a half inning, the half inning ends. "Continuation" runs do not count. Bases are cleared for the next inning. The run limit is not used in the 7th or extra innings. Teams must achieve three outs in those innings.

The time limit for Good Counsel JV games is drop dead at 2 hours, and not no new inning.

Mercy Rule: The 10-run mercy rule will be used for all Good Counsel varsity and junior varsity games. If after completing five innings one team is ahead by 10 runs, the game will be considered complete. The losing team must complete the at bat in the inning before the game can end. If the home team is ahead by 10 runs after four- and one-half innings, the game ends.

Tiebreaker: The International Tie Breaker procedure is NOT used for Good Counsel games. Rather, the extra inning starts like any other inning with no players on base. Automatic outs are taken at the varsity level if the lead-off batter is vacant in the lineup. No out is taken at the JV level if the lead-off position is vacant.

Left Field Out of Play Fence: Good Counsel has a fence very close to left-field foul line. The NFHS rules book recommends that fences be 25 feet from the foul line. There is no distance requirement in the NFHS rules book.

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