1) **CRACKED BATTING HELMETS** – We had a coach restricted to the bench this past week because a batter came into the batting box and was wearing a cracked batting helmet. Rule 4-1-3b does requires that the head coach verify to the plate umpire, prior to the start of the game, that his players are properly equipped and are using only legal equipment, including helmets that have dual extended ear flaps, with the NOCSAE stamp and exterior warning statement on the helmet, and are free of cracks and damage. However, if a batter does come to bat with a damaged helmet, the penalty is to simply replace the helmet and remove it immediately from play. If that exact same helmet comes back into the game later, then the head coach would be subject to a restriction to the bench. The reason for handling the helmet differently than a batter coming to bat with an illegal bat, is that a helmet may much more easily become damaged during play, due to how it may contact the ground or a dugout “wall.” The coach may have truthfully verified that the helmet was legal at the start of the game and not know that it later became damaged. So, again, do not restrict the coach if a batter comes to bat with a prior unknown damaged helmet; just replace the helmet.

2) **PITCHER BEING THE DESIGNATED HITTER FOR HIMSELF** – There have been several instances this past week where a coach attempted, and even insisted that is was legal, for his pitcher to DH for himself. That is NOT the high school rule. Starting defensive players, by NFHS rule, cannot be the Designated Hitter. One coach convinced the umpiring crew by showing them a NCAA laminated DH card. Be professional and courteous, but do not allow a coach to use any of his defensive players to DH for themselves or any other player.

3) **THE USE OF AN “EXTRA HITTER” (EH)** – A few coaches have attempted in include in their lineup the use of a tenth batter, the EH. The use of an Extra Hitter is not legal for high school baseball play.

4) **RE-ENTRY FOR A DESIGNATED HITTER** – There has been some amount of confusion among umpires and coaches concerning a DH’s re-entry ability. As a starting player, the DH has one re-entry to the game afforded to him, just as any of the other starting nine players. But, the first time the DH enters the game as a defensive player, it is not his re-entry being used. As an example, let’s say that Luther is the starting second baseman and Evans is the DH batting for Luther. In the third inning, the coach has Evans, the starting DH, come into the game defensively. That is Luther’s first exit from the game and the role of the DH is now terminated for the balance of the game. It is not a re-entry for Evans. Now, in the fifth inning, the coach has Luther return to the defense. That is Luther’s re-entry and Evans first exit from the game. To complete the scenario, let’s say Evans now comes back and Luther goes back to the bench. Luther is now done for the game, he has no re-entry availability left, and it is Evans’ only re-entry. If Evans is later pulled again, he would no longer be able to participate at that time.

5) **BATTER STEPPING OUT OF THE BATTER’S BOX** – We have had several questions this past week concerning what is the penalty when a batter steps out of the batter’s box, without being granted time, and the pitcher continues and delivers a pitch. First, we have a strike on the pitch itself. High school rules has a pitch legally delivered by a pitcher after the batter left the batter’s box, will always be judged a strike. No Matter the Location of the Pitch, it is a strike. When the batter left the box, NFHS does not want to penalize for doing what he should, even though his delivery may be impacted by the batter’s action. So, if he delivers the pitch, the strike zone without a batter in the box, is infinitely big. Call the strike. Offense won’t agree but stay in the box and we don’t have the problem. Now to the second strike some think we should also call in this situation. Our current rule says a strike should be called on a batter when the batter leaves the batter’s box, delays the game, without one of the approved exceptions to leave the box being present. The key words are delay the game. In our situation, this is up to umpire judgment. But if the batter gets back in the box promptly, there is no delay, and only the strike for the pitch is declared. If the batter does delay the game, then add the second strike. In our play above, only one strike should be called.